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Through The Shadows

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UNIVERSALIST HISTORICAL
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Ara Cushman

THROUGH THE SHADOWS.

BY

REV. I. C. KNOWLTON.

"IN THY LIGHT SHALL WE SEE LIGHT."

Psalm xxxvi. 9.

BOSTON:

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To the many Friends,

WHOSE GENEROUS ASSISTANCE ENABLED ME TO DEVOTE A LIFE-TIME TO THE STUDY OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES,

THIS VOLUME

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THIS book is not published to enlighten learned theologians. It contains no fact, no line of argument, with which they are not familiar. Instead, it is intended to assist that large and respectable class of intelligent men and women who have not an opportunity to study the Bible critically, but who would like to know the real meaning of those ominous passages of Scripture that are supposed by some people to indicate the destiny of impenitent sinners in the future life. It is not a controversial treatise, but a candid, careful attempt to ascertain, if possible, the exact import of the Word of God.

Several years ago, the writer of these pages became dissatisfied with that kind of Scriptural comment which consists in attempts to show what certain controverted texts do not mean. He wanted to know what they do mean. He was aware of the impressive fact that a great

many devout Christians believe the Bible clearly teaches a hopeless doom for the finally impenitent. These Christians did not make or choose their creed. It came to them through the writings and preaching of eminent divines in every century since the days of Saint Augustine, and they could hardly avoid accepting it as truth. Again and again the thought arose in the author's mind: "Perhaps these many good and wise men are right, and you are holding an error. Would it not be well for you to examine again all the supposed proof-texts? If in error, you are not only a 'blind leader of the blind,' but you perhaps are in imminent danger of being lost." Moved by these considerations, he began afresh to study the Bible, to weigh the meaning of words, to notice contexts, to look up the history of the ideas expressed by the sacred writers of all the books from Genesis to Revelation. At times he even tried to "twist the texts," to make them, if possible, disprove Universalism. The work was not done in a hurry; the investigation occupied years; and the chapters in this volume are the result. They may contain erroneous statements and lame logic, — no human work is perfect, — but they are the honest convictions of a candid searcher after truth.

In these pages there are only a few references to other books than the Bible, and for three reasons: First, because an array of names and opinions on one side can often be cancelled by an equal array on the other side; second, because very few readers ever try to find and verify a quotation; and third, because the author has not, at present, ready access to a large library. But the reading and reasoning of fifty years are here condensed and embodied in statements so definite and credible as not to admit a doubt of the writer's honesty and sincerity. The use of Greek and Hebrew type is excluded, because, though giving an air of erudition, it is an annoyance to persons unacquainted with these ancient alphabets; and most of those who will read this book belong to that large class.

With this brief preface, go forth, little book, and kindly greet the many dear friends of the author. Some of them you may find far away; some of them he may not again see in this world. But the old friendship is still warm, and the old wish is still earnest, that all may hear the "glad tidings of great joy," and find the path that leads through the shadows.

I. C. K.

ACTON, MASS., July, 1885.

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THROUGH THE SHADOWS.

I.

AN ALARMING FACT.

"*Flee from the wrath to come.*" — MATT. iii. 7.

IT is an alarming fact that during the past fifteen hundred years, or more, a large majority of the people called Christian have believed that the Bible plainly teaches that many millions of human souls, as keenly sensitive to pain and pleasure as we are, will, as a punishment for their sins, be extremely unhappy forever. And to-day this is not only the belief of the ignorant and superstitious, but the firm conviction of a great many educated, tender-hearted, and truly pious church-members. This belief is taught as a Bible doctrine, in religious creeds and professions of faith, in the pulpit and Sunday-school, in newspapers, magazines, and books, throughout Christendom. Moreover, it is asserted by many that not only vile sinners, but all the unconverted, though they are honest and respectable, — even the writer and the reader of these lines, — are in danger

of this awful, unending doom. The mere statement of this gloomy doctrine is alarming; and the thought that perhaps some of our own dear friends are now in the realm of woe, and that others — even ourselves — may also "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire," is severely painful, even to the best Christians. It drives some souls to doubt the goodness of God, some to hate religion, and some to sink into despair and become insane. A dispensation of Providence so dreadful would indeed be "dark, dark, dark;" and those who believe in it must ever feel the chill of horror and the shadow of doubt.

This alarming doctrine comes to all the children born in Christian lands, and clouds their minds with doubt; and the first and greatest question for them and every human being to ponder, and if possible answer, is this, — Is this dogma true or false? If true, we ought to hasten to "flee from the wrath to come;" if false, all men, and especially the young, ought to be relieved of the gloom with which it shadows the mind. This being evident, a lively discussion of the question is going on, and will go on until a correct conclusion is reached by all. At present we can only say that although some Christians in every century of our era have believed in the final holiness and happiness of all souls, a large majority of church-members believe — and in the Dark Ages, from A. D. 500 to A. D. 1500, nearly all believed — in the endless misery of all who die in their sins. If

the question was to be decided by vote, Universalism would be overwhelmed; but it is a noteworthy fact that the majority is not always in the right.

It is admitted by all candid people that neither Nature nor unaided human reason can solve this momentous problem. This world has a vast amount of apparent wrong and real suffering, but Nature does not intimate anything but peace after death. Reason can push analogy into the spirit realm, but analogy is not reliable. Revelation alone is authoritative; and to it we must all go for light and truth on this subject. What the Bible distinctly asserts, all Christians are willing to accept as truth. But it is a large and ancient book, originally written in Greek and Hebrew; and it therefore requires much careful study to get its exact meaning. Hence, before attempting to "flee from the wrath to come," it is every person's duty to consult the Law and the Prophets, the words of Jesus and his Apostles, and thus try to ascertain in what the wrath consists, and how to flee from its woe. One must know in what direction to flee, or be in danger of running into trouble instead of away from it. Sometimes the ignorant as well as the wicked "flee when no man pursueth," and sometimes the wise do not flee as they should. Let us investigate.

II.

PROOF-TEXTS.

"Search the Scriptures." — JOHN v. 39.

IF the ultimate salvation of all mankind is a Bible doctrine, we have good reason to expect that so great and glorious a truth is clearly and frequently stated in the Good Book, and that nothing denying it or rendering it doubtful can be found in a single chapter or verse. All other important doctrines are set forth distinctly and unequivocally. For example, the Scriptures plainly teach the existence of a Supreme Being, our relation to Him, our duty, the evil of sin, the beauty of holiness, the certainty of retribution, and the immortality of man; and not one passage asserts or hints anything to the contrary. The atheist never quotes Scripture to prove atheism, nor does the sinner cite the Bible as his authority for doing wrong.

That eminent defender of the faith, the late Rev. Dr. Thomas Whittemore, in his "Plain Guide to Universalism," admits that there are one hundred and twenty-five passages — thirty in the Old Testament, and ninety-five in the New — that are sometimes quoted to disprove Universalism. And in addition to

this formidable array of proof-texts, it is claimed by some that there are many other passages that favor the doctrine of endless misery. This is a cloud of witnesses; and if their evidence is understood, and if a large majority of the Christian Church for centuries has not misunderstood its meaning, Universalists should either give up their doctrine or renounce and denounce the Bible. But every educated student of the Scriptures knows, and every honest theologian is willing to admit, that some of these proof-texts are not positive and conclusive evidence of interminable woe, and that the force and weight of the others depend on the meaning attached to about a dozen different words and phrases. Give them the usual definition, and they clearly disprove Universalism. Invalidate this time-honored interpretation, and the doctrine of eternal punishment loses its Scriptural foothold. Over these few words and phrases the last theological battle is to be fought, and the final victory won; and in a matter of so great interest to all mankind, nothing should be overlooked, and nothing assumed that is not in accord with philosophy, history, and the *usus loquendi* of the people in the land and age in which the Scriptures were written. When, if ever, we ascertain exactly what the inspired penmen wrote (for emendation of the Greek and Hebrew text is still going on), and exactly what they meant by the language employed, then, and not till then, will

controversy cease. But that time has not yet come. A person who takes the common version of the Bible to be the precise Word of God, and proceeds to interpret it by the help of an English dictionary, is sure to fall into grave mistakes. Any one who carefully studies the revised version of the New Testament, and compares it with the common version, will be convinced that a perfect knowledge of the Scriptures is not easily attained. We know that some blunders have been made in explaining the Word of God, and this leads us to suspect that others have also been made. It is admitted that there are thousands of various readings, and some interpolations; for example (1 John v. 7), "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." All divines of the present day agree in the opinion that Saint John did not write these words. The passage is not in the revised version. Other proof-texts may yet vanish. The exact meaning of *Azazel* and *Selah*, in the Old Testament, is not certainly known; and there may be many other words in the Bible whose import is not yet decided. Educated men differ in opinion respecting those words; and persons not acquainted with Greek and Hebrew are not qualified to decide the controversy which hinges on the meaning of the original words rendered *hell*, *damnation*, and *eternal*. This being the case, we must either pin our faith on the opinion

of others, or, time and again, with the best helps and lights within reach, go over the entire field in dispute, and decide for ourselves what the Bible teaches. This seems to us the wisest and best course.

III.

FIRST WARNING.

"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." — GEN. ii. 17.

IN the olden time, "eastward in Eden," there was a beautiful garden, in which grew many kinds of fruit trees, all planted by the Lord. It was an earthly Paradise; and in it dwelt our ancestors, — the first human pair, young, innocent, and happy, but frail, ignorant, and mortal. Their Father was ever near them, and they were very dear to Him, because they were His children and in His image and likeness. In the midst of the garden there stood a tree whose fruit was not wholesome for man to eat. It contained poison; and God kindly warned Adam and Eve not to meddle with it, and gave this reason for His warning: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt [or wilt] surely die," or, as it is rendered in the margin, "In the day that eating thou eatest, dying thou shalt die."

This is the first warning in the history of the human race. What did it mean, and what happened? The heedless and perhaps forgetful pair, unmindful of their Father's words, possibly not realizing the ter-

ribleness of the assured result of eating, tempted and misled by the words or actions of an animal called by our translators a serpent, plucked and ate the forbidden fruit; and the result, the penalty, came upon them. That penalty was death; and we are sometimes told that it was "death physical, spiritual, and eternal." Is this true? Did this threefold death take place on the day they ate? As this event was the beginning of sin and retribution, a correct idea of it is essential to a right understanding of God's policy, and His subsequent dealings with sinners.

The warning is in the form of a command, and is the enunciation of a law. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." This was a law that existed in the nature and relations of things. There were other similar laws; for example, Thou shalt not abstain from eating wholesome food, drinking pure water, and breathing fresh air, — for if thou do, thou shalt surely die; Thou shalt not attempt to live under water or in the midst of fire, — for if thou do, death will be the result; Ye shall live in peace and love, or war, misery, and death will be your portion. Then, as now, the human body was frail and mortal, and life could not be prolonged without obedience to the sanitary laws of our nature. May it not be that the "forbidden fruit" was poisonous, and the warning was given on that account? The law, Thou shalt not eat the fruit of this or that tree, is certainly much like other sanitary laws; and the penalty, in justice,

ought to be the same. Inebriety, gluttony, intemperance in gratifying appetites and passions, are violations of the commandments of our Creator: and disobedience now and here, as in Eden, has the same penalty, — sickness, suffering, and ultimate death.

We are not to forget that the penalty for wrong-doing is disciplinary, and has a tendency to lead or drive the sinner back to right-doing. The nausea that results from the use of alcohol or tobacco, and the headache and languor that follow gluttony, are warnings not thus to sin again. When a traveller gets out of the smooth and pleasant highway of right, the obstacles he meets, and the discomforts he finds, soon urge him to go back to the easy path of virtue. In every instance the amount and bitterness of the penalty are in exact proportion to the magnitude of the transgression and the frequency of its repetition. This is just, and beneficial to the doer of evil.

The first pair of human beings, unskilled in the use of reason, and estimating the nature and value of everything by its outward appearance, soon after the beginning of their lives, probably did something wrong. This cannot be doubted. Nothing short of a miracle, nothing but the constant intervention of Divine Providence, could have prevented it. Immediately after this first sin, by the eternal laws of cause and effect, came the penalty, the result. What was it? Can it be possible that for this one apparently slight offence their Father doomed them, and all their

posterity, to "death physical, spiritual, and eternal"? Can any possible stretch of imagination in any one enable him to see in such a penalty for such an offence anything just or good? Do not the love and mercy of God, and the sense of honor and right in man, repudiate the idea?

Furthermore, if such was to be the terrible penalty, humanity suggests that it should have been stated to our innocent, inexperienced, unsuspecting ancestors with unmistakable clearness, and impressed on their minds by frequent repetitions. If an average man of our culture had been present, and foreknown the dire results of disobedience, he would have said to Adam and Eve, in earnest, pleading tones: "I beseech you, do not eat, do not touch, the forbidden fruit, — for if you do, you will not only die, but you and all your posterity, awhile after death, will come to life again, and be thrust down into a horrible place prepared for torture; and there millions of them will be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever. Do not go near that terrible tree." Their Father, the merciful God, was present, and knew all the results of transgression; yet He only said, and so far as we know said only once, "In the day thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die." No hint was given of a life after death, or of any lengthy misery, or of any effect the act might have on posterity. The only conclusion possible to a candid mind is, that God meant just what He said, — no more, no less; and the sup-

position that the penalty was to be endless agony is an awful mistake. But if God did mean eternal misery, it is almost certain that Adam and Eve could not have comprehended His meaning. They had no conception of eternity, no distinct idea of acute suffering, no belief in a burning hell; and the warning did not imply anything of the kind. Evidently they sinned without anticipating any very bitter or lasting evil. But what their Father did say, they could and did understand. Death had been a common event long before the creation of man. They had seen many a leaf, insect, bird, and animal die and return to dust; and the dissolution seemed pitiful and awful. Instinctively they desired to live and enjoy the pleasures of life. No immediate dissolution seemed pending (the warning, in Hebrew, signifies only a beginning to die), the ultimate end seemed far away, and in a moment of excited emotion they yielded. These are the plain facts in the case.

The pair in Eden disobeyed, just as people now sin, because they were strongly tempted, and at the moment lacked the moral courage and will to resist. The tree was handsome, and its fruit inviting. Its significant name, "knowledge of good and evil," drew them to its cool shade. They saw an animal feeding on its fruit with impunity. It did not harm the serpent; why should it injure them? Its pantomimic expression was persuasive and forcible; and, either forgetting the warning or willing to take the

risk of disobedience, they plucked and ate. Presently the unwholesome juice gave them new sensations; new thoughts came; they saw in a new light; and either from cold or a new perception of modesty, realized that they were naked. The result soon began to be manifest. They were inoculated with disease from which they never fully recovered. In the day they began to eat, they began to die; and after a few hundred years of suffering, their bodies returned to dust. The taint of disease was bequeathed to all their posterity, and "in Adam all die." This is the simple story of the first transgression, as recorded in Genesis; and it contains no hint of endless perdition.

But, a very long time after the Eden affair, a new meaning was given to, or seen in, the word *death*, — namely, moral degradation with its inevitable evils. All these evils are involved in sin. Hence it is written: (Ezek. xviii. 4) "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" (Rom. vi. 23) "The wages of sin is death;" (Rom. viii. 6) "To be carnally minded is death;" (Eph. ii. 1) "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" (1 John iii. 14) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death." This kind of death was one of the results of the first transgression, and it occurred on the very day they ate the forbidden fruit. By eating, they disobeyed God, ceased to be innocent,

and morally died. But we are not compelled to infer that this moral change was the beginning of a never-ending curse. The truth is, man was designedly created frail, ignorant, and liable to yield to temptations. He was surrounded by mysteries and dangers: mistakes, transgressions of law, were inevitable. There was not the shadow of a probability that he would not sin. It was merely a question of time; and the theory that for this one little misdeed Adam and all his posterity were doomed to unending suffering seems unreasonable, an outrage of justice, fiendish, false. We cannot believe that God set such a horrible trap, and baited it with fruit so tempting.

Some critics incline to the opinion that the story of Eden is a myth or an allegory; and it may be admitted that some of its details have a mystical complexion, but it is evident that the account has a fact foundation. There must have been a first human pair; they must have been destitute of raiment, and must have dwelt in a grove of fruit trees from which they could obtain food. The fruit of some plants was not wholesome, was poisonous. By chance there grew in the midst of the grove a deadly Japan Upas; and the new pair must have been entirely ignorant of its nature, and the effect of its fruit on the human system. But something that the scientist might call instinct, that a Christian might call the Holy Spirit, and that Moses called (and

rightly called) God, forbade their eating its baneful fruit. The language of the Hebrew text does not require us to believe there was any audible voice. Some kind of animal or insect feeds on each tree and plant; for what is poison to one is wholesome to another. On or by the Upas Adam and Eve saw an animal eating its fruit with impunity. The actions of the animal seemed to prove that the fruit was good; and thus enticed and deceived, unmindful of their instinctive repugnance, they also ate of its fruit. But it made them sick, and opened their mental eyes to the fact that some things were good and some evil. In their distress, God, in the awful majesty of their awakened consciences, reproved them, and hinted other evils that might ensue. A sense of responsibility and duty began to be felt; and then and there commenced man's sad yet sublime career as a moral agent. Eden vanished, and they found themselves in a world of labor and care.

But this first disobedience, misstep, mistake, was not wholly a disaster; for good came as well as evil. It was as a fountain from which flowed many a pure river of life. It aroused the noble spirit of inquiry, investigation, research, and prompted the constant questions, What is this, that, and the other? What is the nature, use, and power of each? How are they related to man and man's interests? These inquiries have led to all the splendid achievements

of science, and to an intimate acquaintance with Nature in all her moods, from the generation of mosses and insects up to the evolution of planets, and the laws that govern the stars. The seemingly terrible lapse from innocence suggested watchfulness, invention, industry, and economy. Noxious plants were to be destroyed; food-bearing vegetables cultivated, storehouses built, garments made; and busy thrift was to displace primitive idleness. Our wheat-fields, cloth-factories, ships, railways, are the outgrowth of making leaf aprons in Eden, and seeking good food. It also brought into play a sympathy, a tenderness, that otherwise would have remained dormant. Adam and Eve never realized how much each was to the other — how each loved the other — until each saw tears in the other's eyes. Then began the culture of the finer feelings and the nobler nature of man and woman, and that heroic self-denial and self-sacrifice that culminated in the death of Jesus, and made the cross the symbol of all that is truly great and good. In that hour, also, hope came in the thought that though Eve was weak and did wrong, her posterity, taught and warned by her misfortune, would do better and better, until "the seed of the woman should bruise [crush] the serpent's head," — a hope that has grown so large and bright that many a brave and loving soul in our day dares to believe in "the final restitution of all things." In fact, we can call to mind scarcely a

single blessing now enjoyed on earth, that has not directly or indirectly come from that ominous hour of temptation, sin, shame, penitence, promise, and right resolution. Man, not God, made a mistake; and He has overruled it for good.

Taking this view of what is called the Fall of man, we have no heart to denounce sweet mother Eve or dear father Adam. True, they lost their delightful Eden; but better Edens are our inheritance. The cultivated and beautified earth; and our pleasant and comfortable homes are superior to the ancient forest garden; and we are not unlike our first parents in many respects. Each of us began life as an Adam or Eve, innocent, but weak and ignorant. For each of us there was in store duties and responsibilities, — dangers to shun, and good to gain. In youth we were advised, warned, threatened; but each one of us was tempted, and each in some sinister way yielded and did wrong, — ate or drank or indulged in something pernicious, and began to die. Many thousand people die every month because of wrong eating or drinking. He who would attain a long life, and be prosperous and happy, should abstain from all forbidden fruits and deeds. Conforming to the eternal laws of right is equivalent to both serving God and taking care of ourselves. Intemperance in parents taints their offspring. Yet in the darkest hour the penitent seeker may find some hope of a better future, here or hereafter.

Taking all these things into consideration, we are compelled to conclude that the first warning does not refer to any after-death results, but only to the vast earthly consequences of man's beginning to learn good and evil.

And, finding in this first proof-text no threat or intimation of eternal damnation, we are encouraged to hope that the Bible does not reveal such a doom for any sinner. One shadow has vanished.

IV.

FORSAKEN OF GOD.

"And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man." — GEN. vi. 3.

THESE words were spoken concerning the very wicked people who lived before the Deluge, and their import is ominous. The Divine Spirit had long striven to reform and save these very wicked men. Through conscience, by impression and intuition, by appeals to their innate sense of honor and right, and by temporal chastisements, it had endeavored to win them to virtue, but in vain. Wrong was still the rule. Noah had preached righteousness to them, but his sermons were unavailing. Their wickedness was so great that "every imagination of their hearts was evil." Their reformation was hopeless, and a crisis was inevitable. God saw it, and said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man;" in other words, "The present condition of affairs — the pleading of my pitying spirit with their rebellious spirits — shall cease." This sounds like the solemn announcement of a hopeless doom. Those from whom the love and care of God are withdrawn must sink down into the lowest state of sin and sorrow. Probably some

people at the present day are as sinful and degraded as were the antediluvians, and hence their fate must be as terrible. The cannibal savages of Africa, as described by Stanley, seem to be as far down in the scale of degradation as human beings can go; and, taking into the account the Gospel light that shines in our country, some in our midst are as guilty as the sooty sons of the "dark continent;" and if God-forsaken, they must go down with the ancient sinners with whom the Divine Spirit ceased to strive. But before consigning them to hopeless perdition, let us very carefully study what God said, and the occasion on which it was spoken, that, if possible, we may find some reason to hope for their ultimate salvation.

The statement of the Lord was this: "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." This was said in an age when the average length of human life was more than nine hundred years. Some critics are of the opinion that the Lord meant that He would not permit people to live and sin so long, but would contract the average length of human life to one hundred and twenty years. If this opinion is correct, the passage does not refer to anything beyond the grave, or to anybody since the age of our long-living ancestors.

But it may be asked, Did the antediluvians actually live nearly a thousand years? The Bible

affirms that they did, and the writer of Genesis undoubtedly had a tradition or a revelation to that effect. Yet in the minds of some men in our day there are grave doubts on this subject. They say that in those primitive times the people were liable to err in dates and numbers. Their year may not have been of the same length as our year; and what they called a hundred may not have been what we call a hundred. Besides, for a people ignorant of writing, it must have been difficult to preserve in memory the date of birth or the lapse of years. At the present time, in our own land, there is many an illiterate Indian and Negro who does not know his own age; and very likely many of the people before the Flood did not know theirs. Further, learned physiologists tell us that the average human body will actually wear out in about two centuries, and that then death must ensue. If this is true, the stories of ancient extreme longevity are fictions. Finally, it is not easy to imagine any need, use, or benefit of a life protracted beyond a century; and what is useless, God does not permit.

But in opposition to all this, it may be urged that the first inhabitants of the earth were not tainted with hereditary disease; that they ate simple, healthy food; that they lived out-of-doors, and breathed pure air; that they did not exhaust themselves by excessive labor or anxiety; and hence they must have attained a great age. In our de-

generate times there are quite a number of centenarians, and in primitive times a longer lease of life is certainly probable. In a book published some thirty years ago, by Fowler & Wells, entitled "Hydropathy for the People," there is (pp. 43–46) a long list of persons remarkable for longevity. It is there stated that Galen lived 140 years; Thomas Parr, 152; Petrarch Caston, 185; Thomas Cam, 207; and Numas de Cugna, 307. If these figures are correct — and they seem well authenticated — the extreme longevity of the people before the Flood is not only possible but probable. Admit this, and a literal interpretation of the passage under review is easy and satisfactory. "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not strive with man so long. He shall not sin eight or nine centuries; his average length of life shall be cut down to an hundred and twenty years." In accordance with this decision, the average length of life began to diminish, and continued to diminish until the time of King David, when it was only about seventy years. The natural causes of this shortening of life were intemperance, crime, and the general degradation of the people. In this view of the case the text does not refer to any thing or condition after death; the shortening of the earth life is all that was intended.

This is one interpretation; learned men have another and perhaps a better theory. The Divine announcement was made a little more than a century

before the Flood. At that time the human race was so desperately wicked as to be unfit to live. It merited destruction, and was ripe for doom. But the Lord, in His great mercy, in effect said: "This cannot be permitted to continue forever, but I will grant man an hundred and twenty years more in which to repent and reform." The allotted time elapsed; the people grew worse and worse; and then the Flood came and swept them all away. If this interpretation is correct, the Lord did not allude to a shortening of average human life, but to the number of years that would elapse before the great Deluge.

But it may be asked, Do the facts warrant this conclusion? Was there in ancient time a world-wide, destructive deluge? It seems to us there are many good reasons for answering these questions in the affirmative: (1) The Bible says there was such a flood; and the Bible is an ancient and reliable book. (2) The old but recently discovered Assyrian tablets, written without any knowledge of Moses or Hebrew tradition, give a full description of such a flood. (3) All the great nations of antiquity had distinct traditions of such a flood, and these many apparently independent traditions must have originated in some actual occurrence. (4) A submersion of a large area of territory, of perhaps all the then inhabited earth, may be accounted for on geological principles, — the depression of the land and the inrush of ocean water. It is said there is positive proof that the island

of Great Britain has thus been depressed, flooded, and then elevated, several times (*vide* Huxley's lecture on "A Piece of Chalk"). (5) The marine shells frequently found on the summits of lofty mountains indicate that whole continents were once covered with salt water. (6) The testimony of the smooth rounded rocks seen on every side is clear and conclusive. God did not make the countless millions of pebbles on the earth; each one of them is a chip from some old ledge, worn smooth and round in moving water. All land containing them was once and for a long time under water. This is the affirmation of all scientists. Where we now are, waves once rolled, and fish once swam. (7) There have probably been several floods; but each one was a local affair, because there is not water enough on earth to submerge all the land at once. Noah's Flood was a local affair; but it was a real, terribly destructive deluge. At the present time a large portion of the Sahara and of the territory around the Dead Sea and the Caspian Sea is below the ocean level; and if a free communication were opened by an earthquake or otherwise, we should have a modern Flood.

The Noachian Deluge was real; but there is no necessity for our supposing that those who handed down the story to Moses were thoroughly versed in geology or natural history. Their *all* was not commensurate with the *all* of modern scientists, but much less, much smaller. Nothing is too hard or difficult

for the miracle-working power of God; and it is certain that without superhuman assistance Noah and his probably unskilled workmen could not have built a vessel large enough and strong enough to accommodate all the land animals of earth, with food enough to sustain them a year. Nor, supposing the ark built and ready for her voyage, could Noah and his three sons, without Divine aid, have gathered and shipped all the beasts, birds, reptiles, and insects, and for twelve months kept them from dying for want of food, drink, pure air, and cleanliness. And after the ark grounded on the cold peak of Mount Ararat, nothing but a stupendous miracle could have got them all safely down the steep slope of the mountain and away to the homes adapted to their natures. We are reluctant to believe in so many and so strange miracles performed to avoid the simple re-creation of animals. But if we adopt the theory that Noah's Flood was a local affair, submerging only a few hundred thousand square miles of territory, and drowning only such animals as dwelt within this area, all difficulties vanish; we can accept the Mosaic narrative as in the main correct, and believe that about a hundred and twenty years after the announcement was made, the sustaining influence of the Divine Spirit was withdrawn, and the sinful race of men perished. Admit this interpretation, and the passage contains no allusion to the realm of the dead.

There is still another theory which, ignoring all controversy about the Flood and primitive longevity, finds even in this text a gleam of hope for all sinners. All men have sinned, and God would have them all come to Him and be saved; and, to secure the gratification of His desire, His Spirit strives to reform them. With God, to try is to succeed. Man can convert and save some sinners; the Almighty can convert and save all. The inference is plausible that He will overcome all opposition, and the striving of His Spirit culminate in the holiness and happiness of all souls. In fact, admit the premises, and no other conclusion is possible. What He tries to do, He will do; for nothing can counteract the Almighty.

But the soundness of the premises is very doubtful. God is infinite; man is finite, small, and weak; and the idea of a strife, a struggle, between the two is utterly absurd. Compared with Deity, man is a mere infinitesimal mite that cannot present the least resistance to the mighty current of the Divine will. If God has the smallest desire to reform and save a sinner, that sinner's reformation and salvation is absolutely certain. He who by a word can create a world, never strives with man or anything. But the laws, tendencies, influences, ordained by the Creator do strive to keep man in the right; and these he can resist, though in the long run they overpower him and make him conform to their regulations. They urge man to be temperate; and if they cannot

conquer in any other way, they will sober him in the grave.

The Rev. Dr. Hedge, of Harvard College, thinks the text should be rendered, "My spirit shall not always remain in man." If this is correct, the idea of striving, struggling, vanishes. It is the Divine Spirit, or influence, that sustains life. When that is withdrawn, death ensues. This withdrawing may take place in age, in sickness, or by violence, — drowning, for example. "My spirit shall not always remain in man;" the Flood shall come, and the spirit in man shall return to God who gave it. This seems to us a very reasonable and satisfactory interpretation.

But admit as correct the theory that God's Spirit, after striving with sinners long enough to find that they are incorrigible and irreclaimable, retires and leaves them to sink down in ruin and woe unending, yet this theory has no support in the text, because *olam*, the Hebrew word translated *always*, does not necessarily indicate endless duration. It and its Greek equivalent, *aionios*, are the only words in the Bible that designate the length of retribution; and all good scholars are agreed that they may mean a limited period of time, long or short; Scripture usage also sustains this view.

The Aaronic priesthood and the Jewish possession of Canaan were to be *olam*, everlasting; but they ended long ago. By a special statute of the Mosaic

Code (Exod. xxi. 6), it was ordained that under certain circumstances a servant should serve his master *olam,* forever, — that is, during the remainder of his life. In speaking of his confinement in the whale, Jonah (ii. 6) says, "The earth with her bars was about me *olam*, forever;" yet it was only three days. In these and many other passages, *olam* clearly means a period of limited duration. In more than fifty places in the Pentateuch alone, the word is used to describe things that long ago came to an end. The Jews made use of the phrase "*olam* and beyond," though there can be nothing beyond eternity. *Olam* is also found in the plural, *olamin;* but there can be but one eternity. It is evident that *olam* does not necessarily denote endlessness. In the text under consideration, *olam* is very properly rendered *always:* "My spirit shall not always (much longer) strive with man. A deluge shall come, and the striving end in the death of the race."

If the solemn announcement "My spirit shall not always strive with man" does allude to the after-death condition of sinful souls, we are at liberty to suppose that it means annihilation instead of suffering. But there is not a hint of either; the sole thought expressed is that the Divine Spirit will cease to strive with man. The passage does not teach the ultimate loss of any soul, but it contains a valuable moral lesson. To every human being there comes at times the "still, small voice" of God,

beseeching him to do right. If he heeds it, blessings come; if he disregards it, a flood of afflictions come. Only the wicked are drowned; righteous Noah is safe. The ark is made of truth, love, and virtue; it is large enough to accommodate all human beings, and float them all to heaven.

V.

THE ANGRY GOD.

"God is angry with the wicked every day." — Ps. vii. 11.

THIS, if literally true, is the most alarming statement in the Bible, and the most awful fact in the universe. We know what anger is, and how it operates. We have felt its malign influence in our own souls, and seen the manifestations of its presence in others. We know that it suggests revenge, desires the punishment of an enemy, and enjoys the agony of the guilty. It dethrones reason, forgets mercy, and deals in hard blows. If, in this sense of anger (and we can imagine no other), God is really angry with the wicked, their doom to the worst possible fate seems inevitable; and not only they, but we and all men, — for all have sinned. When a man is angry with us, we realize that we are in danger; if God is angry with us, the danger is infinitely greater: man could only kill us; God could torment us after death and forever. Admit that He indulges in anger, and that His anger is like ours, and there can be no hope for universal salvation; even the best of Christians would often have painful doubts of their own safety.

The Bible plainly and solemnly affirms that God is angry every day, that sometimes His anger rises or deepens into wrath, and that the wrath ultimates in vengeance,

"Red, unrestrained, vindictive, final, fierce."

God says (Deut. xxxii. 22): "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and it shall burn to the lowest hell." The Scriptures speak of His anger as "fierce," of His wrath as "hot," of His fury as "great," and of His saying, "Vengeance is mine." In scores of passages these alarming descriptions of Deity are repeated. We accept and try to believe these strange statements; but meditating upon them brings doubt, anxiety, and almost dislike of God. Such a being we may fear, but not very warmly love.

We find it difficult to imagine what has happened or can happen to cause an infinite being to become angry. In frail, nervous man, anger springs from annoyance. When any one wantonly injures us, or a domestic animal will not obey us, or an insect stings us, or a pebble causes us to stumble, or the wind blows off our hats, or our cherished plans fail, we are foolishly prone to be angry. It is because we are weak and our feelings not under control. But can the great, wise, unchangeable God be annoyed? Do His worlds, works, or children get out of order, do wrong, and disturb His serenity? Do His wise plans ever come to nought? Do His

earthly sons and daughters tease, worry, and pester Him? Did He not know how things would work, and what His children would do and become, before He created them? Has He tried experiments and failed to obtain the results desired? Has He ever been surprised, disappointed, wronged, or abused? If these questions are answered in the affirmative, there is cause for His anger; but He is not a Supreme Being, He is only a demi-god. But if they are answered in the negative, as it seems to us they must be, then what has excited His wrath we cannot conjecture.

Again, in us annoyance is the outcome of our lack of foresight, sound judgment, and will-power. A man builds a fence to protect his meadow; hungry cattle break through and spoil his growing corn, and he is annoyed and angry. He erred in judgment; the fence was a failure. A man puts a curb-bit in the mouth of his fiery horse, and goes to ride feeling safe; but a rein breaks, the horse shies and overturns the carriage. The rider is hurt, annoyed, angered; but the accident was the result of his neglect to see that his harness was all right. The State enacts stringent laws against criminals, and provides severe penalties; but crime continues, and the public is annoyed and made angry. The truth is, legislators have neither the wisdom nor the power to prevent criminality. Is God similarly deficient in strength and knowledge? Did He not foresee that

the serpent would tempt, and the woman yield? Did He not foreknow that the penal laws thundered from Mount Sinai would not restrain from iniquity the stiff-necked Jews, and keep them in the way of holiness? If He did not foresee and foreknow these things, we cannot call Him all-wise; if He did foresee and foreknow how frail and weak the human race would be, how easily tempted, how liable to yield, why did He not fashion man more strong, or leave fewer temptations, serpents, devils, in his way? These thoughts and questions will come, and they present us two alternatives, — either God is short-sighted, not very wise, not very good, and therefore angry when His poorly planned creation does not work as He expected; or we must modify the meaning of the Divine anger. We prefer the latter alternative. Let God be esteemed as perfect, though the esteem invalidate a few poor old Hebrew words.

In man, anger is a species of insanity. The angry man's head is not level. He does not rightly use his reason. He indulges in violence, regardless of consequences, and harms his enemies, his friends, and himself. Is this God's style of anger? Does He curse, smite, and burn without reason, and regardless of results? We think not. It seems clear to our mind, that, being all-wise, His every act flows from pure reason and love, and is done for the best good of all. If so, anger in Him is not what

we call anger; or, in other words, He is not angry in any sense of that word known to us.

The Infinite One by necessity is unchangeable. If angry at any one time, He always was and always will be angry. He does not flare up with passion, and then cool off, like a weak, passionate man, but retains the same serenity yesterday, to-day, and forever. This is clearly taught by both revelation and reason. An angry person is unhappy: if God is angry every day, He is unhappy every day; if angry all the time, He is unhappy all the time, and deserves the sincere pity of all good beings, — though this thought is almost downright blasphemy, and we will try to banish it from our minds.

Taking all these things into consideration, a right-minded man cannot possibly believe that God's anger has any resemblance to human anger; in other words, we cannot believe He is ever angry in the sense in which we use that word. Instead, we are compelled to believe that the infinite and perfect Supreme Being is ever calm, ever satisfied, ever serenely happy. Evidently there is a monstrous mistake somewhere, which all wise men should be equally eager to discover and rectify; and this we will now attempt.

The writers of the Bible believed and taught that God rules the world and regulates all its affairs, — that He causes the earthquake, the lightning, and the hurricane; that He sends the sword, the pesti-

lence, the locusts, and the famine; that He punishes the guilty and blesses the righteous; — and they were right. The first cause inaugurates all results; and the great First Cause we call God. He, directly or indirectly, causes all the events that transpire. But in trying to make the ignorant and unspiritual people of their times realize the Divine presence, supremacy, and providence, the sacred writers were obliged to resort to anthropomorphism, to speak of God as an immense man. Accordingly they allude to His head, face, eyes, ears, mouth, and breath; to His sitting on a throne; to His going hither and thither, talking, laughing, mocking, and being angry, like an immense man. These bold figures of speech, not one of which is literally true, were employed to impress a great moral lesson on the Jews, to cause them to realize the presence of a Divine providence and to trust and obey God. The strange anthropomorphism was used to serve a good purpose. The later Prophets, though sometimes indulging in the old style, had higher and better views of Deity. Isaiah says (lv. 8, 9): "My ways are not your ways, neither are your thoughts my thoughts, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my ways than your ways." His anger, therefore, is unlike ours. His way with sinners may be unlike our petulant, vindictive way. Jesus said, "God is a spirit;" St. John said, "God is love;"

St. James said, "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Scientific research confirms these statements. The thunder-storm is not an indication of Divine wrath; it is a wholesome effort of nature to restore an electrical equilibrium. The terrible sword of the Civil War was not drawn by an offended Deity; it was the result of an "irrepressible conflict" of opinion on the subject of slavery. Even the names of God — the Eternal, the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent One — indicate an entire absence of anything like human feeling or passion. In view of this fact we must interpret all the figurative language of the Bible, or be in danger of becoming infidels. In the light of this interpretation, we should shape our conduct, not to please or displease the immovable Calm, but to conform to the eternal law of right; because in keeping this law "there is great reward."

It may be asked, Why is not this interpretation generally adopted? Why do so many people still believe in an angry God? The answer is, that some people believe what they are taught, and neither dare nor care to question its correctness. Catholic laymen are taught to do this; many Protestant laymen do it without being taught. Others believe God is literally angry, because they look at Him through sinful eyes. A criminal, it is said, fancies he hears the footfall of the pursuer in every unexpected sound, and catches sight of the avenger

in every unusual appearance. Our feelings are projected upon everything around us. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure." On this principle, to the wicked God must seem to be angry. Hence millions on millions of the ungodly believe, and must believe, that His anger is literal and real; and of them it may be said, "They believe a lie, that they may be damned." But the guilty, blind and fearful, are not competent rightly to interpret the dark sayings in the Bible. We reject their fear-inspired notions, and are compelled to believe the testimony of the best thinkers and clearest seers. God is not, never was, never will be, angry as a petulant man is angry. His opposition to evil is not a temporary flash of passion, but the natural antagonism of right to wrong. In this antagonism we rejoice, and for it feel truly grateful. We love God all the more because He is hostile to sin, and, in figurative language, is angry with the wicked every day. His anger is pure and good, and it must eventually subdue all evil. Let Thine anger, Thy hostility, continue, O Lord, until there is an entirely holy universe.

VI.

THE HOPELESS.

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death." — PROV. xiv. 32.

IN other words, the righteous, feeling at peace with God, are cheered by a hope of future safety, that ever comforts and sustains them. The wicked, by a sense of unworthiness and a fear of retribution, are deprived of hope, and rendered wretched. This absence of hope is alluded to in other passages of Scripture. The very sinful are "without God and without hope." If a small, weak hope should remain in their dark souls, it is frail "as a spider's web;" it shall be "broken, taken away, perish." To the wicked, life has little joy, and death seems either a leap in the dark or a gateway to misery. This is the evident meaning of the proverb, and it suggests several serious and important considerations.

The text is a specimen of the almost invariable manner in which the Bible classifies mankind. It often alludes to two opposite classes of people, not as the converted and the unconverted, nor as profes-

sors and non-professors, nor as church-members and worldlings, nor as evangelical and unevangelical, but as the righteous and the wicked, the doers of good and the doers of evil, the holy and the unholy, saints and sinners. The discrimination is not made between creeds, but deeds. In the great judgment described by the Master in Matt. xxv. 31–46, it is those who have not done good that go away into everlasting punishment, while those who have done good enter into life eternal. We like this Bible fashion of putting things. It seems to us the right doctrine to preach to men, and the right way to teach children. "Do right, and it will be well with you; do wrong, and evil will surely come. No escape is possible."

The statement is but one of many in which the conditions and portions of the righteous and the wicked are set in sharp contrast. Invariably the righteous are praised, and promised the best things; and the wicked are condemned, and threatened the worst things. Unless they repent, there are no precious promises for sinners; and unless they fall from grace, no threatenings made to saints. And this way of contrasting the condition and fortunes of men is in accord with justice and the nature of the soul. Ages of human experience testify that "the way of the transgressor is hard;" and that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," are upon and in "every soul of man that doeth evil."

True, the wicked may acquire wealth, obtain office and high position, and indulge in sensuous luxuries; but their capacity for pure and solid happiness is gone, and if they were to speak their real feelings they would say, "Vanity, vanity; all is vanity and vexation of spirit." It is true also that the virtuous are liable to suffer losses and curses, injury and pain; but they can still retain their self-respect, and rejoice in the hope of an end to ill, and an eternity of good. Anywhere and at any time it is safe to repeat the ancient advice: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; . . . woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him."

The passage under consideration contains no allusion to a life after death. It is almost certain that its author had no idea of the immortality revealed by Jesus. The reference is entirely to affairs in this life. The predicates are in the present tense. The wicked *is* driven away; the righteous *hath* hope. Whatever may be hereafter, the text limits our reflections at this time to the here and now; and this is always the main thing to be thought of and cared for. Make the present right, and the future may be safely intrusted to Him who liveth forever and doeth all things well.

The wicked are driven away by whom or what? It may be of no consequence to them, but we cannot avoid the inquiry. Driving implies forcible compulsion; what is the force, and what the instrument

or means employed? Is it muscular or mental, or both? Is God the driver, or Christ, or who? We would rather not think of the great God as concerned in any such petty business; and the translation of Professor Noyes entirely relieves us of the thought: "By wickedness the wicked is thrust down, but the righteous hath hope even in death." Deity has no hand in the affair, and no driving is done. Wickedness is a weight; sin is a load, and it thrusts the sinner down. The sinking is not caused by the hand or will or wrath of any one; it is the working of a law as old, as universal, and as unchanging as the law of gravity. It cannot be repealed or dodged. Down the wicked must go; and every added sin sinks them lower. A hundred passages tell the same story. "A guilty conscience needs no accuser;" it decides its own case and condemns without a hearing. "Murder will out." The criminal feels that his crime is known at least to God, and he expects retribution. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth;" but he cannot flee into safety, because he carries the avenger with him. By his wickedness he is driven away and thrust down.

The special thing mentioned in the text is hope. This the righteous have; from this the wicked are driven away. But the nature and power of hope are neither understood nor appreciated by the many. Hope is desire and expectation combined; it is a pleasure and an influence united. For example, a

young person desires love, a home, and prosperity; and if he or she is doing right, is kind, honest, industrious, economical, there is good reason to expect that the desire will be satisfied. Thus is hope both the joy and the stimulus of all righteous young people. It inclines them to self-respect, prudence, and "patient continuance in well-doing." In due time the sweet hope ripens into fruition; and love, home, and competency are attained by them, and by no others. Then other hopes come to cheer and encourage them, — hope for beautiful children, hope to win the respect and confidence of the community, to be useful in society, to help make the world better, to continue in prosperity, to grow old gracefully, and at last to depart in peace and rise to a higher realm. For the righteous, and they only, have hope even in death; and to them alone are the eloquent lines of Campbell[1] applicable, —

"Unfading hope, when life's last embers burn,
And soul to soul and dust to dust return,
Heaven to thy charge resigns the awful hour;
Oh, then thy kingdom comes, immortal power!
What though each spark of earth-born rapture fly
The quivering lip, pale cheek, and closing eye,
Bright to the soul, thy seraph hands convey
The morning beams of life's eternal day.
Then, then, the triumph and the trance begin,
And all the phœnix spirit burns within.

[1] Pleasures of Hope.

Oh, deep, enchanting prelude to repose;
The dawn of bliss, the twilight of our woes!
We almost hear the parting spirit sigh,
It is a dread but glorious boon to die."

To a person entirely destitute of hope, the future is all dark and gloomy. Such a person, having no desire or expectation of any good time coming, either in this world or the next, is in danger of losing self-respect, becoming indifferent to the welfare of society, and sinking down into despair; and this is as low as any soul can go. May the good Lord save us from hopelessness!

But, thanks to a kind Providence, the world abounds in hope. The glittering air-castles of the young and the dreamy are built by hope. The many millions of men and women who are patiently working, watching, waiting, and bearing the heavy burdens of poverty, disappointment, grief, or sickness, are sustained and cheered by hope. In fact, the hope of attaining some good thing — a pleasant home, the fruition of love, recovery from illness, going at last to heaven or Nirvana — is at times cherished and enjoyed by almost every human being. How can this be accounted for? Is righteousness abundant, or do the wicked indulge in hope? Some explanation is necessary.

It is said in the Old Testament, and repeated in the New, that "there is none righteous; no, not one." If by the righteous are meant absolutely holy

and perfect people, the statement is correct. No such saints, except perhaps Enoch and Elijah, exist, or ever existed, on the earth. Even the best of Christians, like Moses the man of God, sometimes get out of the right way; and in all probability there is no person that has not some good quality. The obvious inference is, therefore, that the words *righteous* and *wicked*, as used in Scripture, generally have a comparative meaning, and denote the better and the worse. Admit this, and all is clear. There are degrees in hope. The more righteous, the larger hope; the more wicked, the less hope. No one is entirely virtuous, and hence no one is free from anxiety; no one is entirely vicious, and hence no one is entirely destitute of hope. No one has more, no one less, than his moral condition merits. What the world, what each person, needs, is not more hope, but more righteousness. Attain the virtue, and the hope will come as a result.

And the cheering fact should not be forgotten, that no person, however good or bad, is crystallized and incapable of change. It is possible for saints, and, according to Milton, even angels, to fall from grace, become sinners, and lose hope; and for sinners, by their own efforts and Divine aid, to reform, become righteous, and attain a glorious hope. This is conversion; and instances of it are not uncommon. Even the malefactor on the cross became so penitent that Jesus gave him hope by saying, "This day

shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Possibly some sinners are so vile and weak that unaided they cannot reform. Before the advent of Christ and the promulgation of the Gospel, nearly all mankind were in this impotent condition, and multitudes still are. But "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;" and it is not a mere gorgeous rainbow arching the sky, but a saving power. The goodness of God leadeth sinners to repentance; and by this blessed means reformation is going on, little by little, everywhere, all the time; and hence hope, the consequent of virtue, illumes the entire world. Truth, manifest goodness, and faith give birth to hope.

During the Sepoy rebellion in India, some twenty-five years ago, a detachment of the British army, led by General Havelock, forced its way into the besieged city of Lucknow. The object was to relieve the imprisoned English garrison; but instead, the enemy in countless numbers, commanded by the ferocious Nana Sahib, whom Jules Verne rightly styles the "Demon of Cawnpore," closed in around the town, and shut off all communication with the outside world. The new state of affairs was worse than the old, because there were more to feed and more to suffer. Escape was impossible, and to remain there long was to die of starvation. The siege continued through dreary weeks and months; provisions grew fearfully scarce; to escape the missiles

of the foe, the garrison was obliged to occupy underground apartments; disease set in, deaths were frequent, and the situation was appalling. One slender hope remained. They knew that a true soldier never deserts or forgets his comrades, — knew that the noble Sir Colin Campbell, then Commander-in-Chief in India, would think of them, guess their condition, and if possible, hasten to their relief. But they also knew that he was far, far away, and that he might not be able to fight his way to Lucknow. Day after day, week after week, and month after month wearily wore away, and the close-pent sufferers sank deeper and deeper into despondency.

At last, after many had died, and all the living were feeble, on the eighty-third day of the besiegement, a sharp-eared young Scotchwoman suddenly shouted, "They're coming; I can hear the slogan." The slogan is the battle-cry, the war-whoop, of Scotch soldiers, and General Campbell always had with him a detachment of Highlanders. Her companions sprang up and listened with bated breath, but not hearing anything, sank again into the silence of despair. They deemed her insane. But a minute after, with greater animation, she cried out again, "The Campbells are coming; dinna ye hear the slogan?" The sounds were nearer; and soon others, and presently all, heard the joyous sounds of shouting thousands, and the roar of battle. Their friends had indeed arrived; and hope came like a flood of

glory. Weak as they were, they sprang up, embraced each other, wept, laughed, and shouted. General Campbell, with a large army, was near them, was fighting for them, and they would soon be rescued. The hope ended in fruition. In a few hours the siege was raised, and they were safe within the British lines.

The entire human race was — and to a large extent still is — imprisoned in ignorance, "under chains of darkness," and perishing in the bondage of iniquity. Escape by self-effort was impossible. Long, dreary, painful, and hopeless was the inthralment. At length, forty centuries after this desperate state of affairs began, some listening Judæan shepherds in the pastures near Bethlehem heard the slogan of heaven, — the joyful shout of angels, — "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke ii. 11). It was true; redemption was at hand. The Captain of our salvation had arrived with a force sufficient to vanquish the foes of mankind and save the world. Yes, the Deliverer had come. He taught, wrought, suffered, died, rose, ascended to heaven. But this was not all; his mission was not an episode in history that soon ended. It was to be world-wide, and to last till the end of time. He vanished from mortal sight, but he left with his disciples a Gospel that is the "power of God unto salvation." For nearly nineteen hundred years this irresistible Gospel has

been singing, shouting, glad tidings of great joy to all people. It makes known Divine love and immortal life. It argues, pleads, and implores; and it bends a bright bow of hope over every one that believeth. It assures sinners that they can become righteous, and be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." But what of the people who thronged the earth for four thousand years before the birth of Christ, and the millions and millions who have since lived and died in sin, without ever hearing a syllable of the Gospel? Sir Colin Campbell saved all he could, — saved all that were alive in Lucknow; the dead were beyond his reach. We suppose God will also save all He can. Are the dead beyond the reach of His mercy? This is the question we are trying to answer; and on it the passage under review throws no light. It was written long before the birth of the Saviour.

VII.

SHEOL.

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." — Ps. ix. 17.

TWO things are manifest: first, there is a hell; second, the wicked, and all the nations that forget God, are turned (thrust down) into it. It has long been generally believed that hell is a place, and the most awful place in the universe; and that being thrust into hell is the Divine punishment for sin, and the most horrible punishment that even God can inflict. We shudder at the bare thought of any soul being doomed to this realm of woe; and in fear for ourselves and pity for others, we cannot refrain from asking, Is the common belief correct? Is there no mistake about it? What and where is hell? It is certain that the space-penetrating telescope has not brought it to view, and the miner's shaft has not reached it; and neither reason nor science can tell us anything about it. But we are not left in utter ignorance on the subject. The Bible contains reliable information concerning hell; and if we study its sacred pages in a candid and scholarly manner, we may learn all we need to know

respecting this terrible realm. The learned and orthodox Dr. Campbell said, "When we speak as Christians, we express by the word *hell* the place of punishment of the wicked after the general judgment." This definition of *hell* is quoted in Worcester's Quarto Dictionary; and without doubt it is substantially correct. Now, what does the Bible say about this fearful place, how many times is it mentioned, and what was its Hebrew name? To these questions we can find explicit answers, and thus obtain a correct idea of the Bible doctrine of hell.

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language; and the only word in it that is, or can be, translated *hell* is *Sheol*. This word occurs sixty-five times: in thirty-one instances it is rendered *hell;* in thirty-one, *grave;* in three, *pit*. If this word actually does designate "the place of punishment of the wicked after the general judgment," it is very strange that King James's translators, in a majority of texts, did not render it *hell*. It shows that they had pretty strong doubts about its real meaning. As a matter of fact, the word has several shades of significance, and is used to denote different though related things as a careful investigation will show.

In Gesenius's Hebrew Lexicon the primary meaning of *Sheol* is said to be "the under-world;" but to realize the import of this definition, we must call

to mind the ancient idea of the universe. According to the Ptolemaic theory, the earth was the grand, immovable centre, and around it the sun, moon, and stars revolved. The flat surface of the earth divided all space into two parts or realms, the upper and the lower; and by this division there were three localities, — the region above, the surface of the earth, and the region below. The upper region, realm, or world was heaven, or the heavens. In the opinion of some people there were three heavens, one above another. The lowest heaven was the atmosphere in which the birds fly and the clouds float. Above this, and resting upon it, was the second heaven, — the pure blue sky in which the stellar spheres moved on in their lofty courses. Above the crystal arch of the sky, and resting on its transparent ceiling, was the third heaven, — the heaven of heavens; the high and holy place, in which was the home, the throne, the court of God, and the abodes of the blessed immortals. Of course no one had a very definite idea of the heavens; but something like this must have been the imaginary outline of the upper regions. It was this third heaven to which Saint Paul knew a man caught up, and in which he saw things that human language is not adequate to describe. It was this heaven that Stephen, the first martyr, saw opened, revealing Christ standing at the right hand of God. It was to this heaven that the angels went, after making known to the shepherds the birth of Jesus.

And it was up to this heaven that dreaming Jacob saw the ladder reach, on which the angels descended and ascended. It was a pure, beautiful, glorious abode for God and His spiritual family to dwell in, but not for man. We can recall no passage in the Old Testament that intimates that any man ever prayed or expected to go up to this high heaven after death. The ancient Jews do not seem to have been cheered by even the faintest hope of a blessed immortality. If at death, as Solomon said, the spirit returns to God from whom it came, it was not as a person, but as an impersonal life or divine essence.

In the under-world, the immense realm below the surface of the earth, the ancient Hebrews fully believed, though their idea of it was vague and indefinite. No human eye could see it, and no person had ever come from it to give a description of its characteristics. It seemed to be a vast, dark, silent, shadowy, lifeless realm, undescribed because indescribable. This gloomy region the writers of the Old Testament called *Sheol*, a word signifying "the under-world;" and *Sheol* appears to have been the only suitable name which their language afforded. It was into Sheol that the wicked were turned, with all the nations that forget God.

Sheol, however, like most substantives in all languages, had a secondary meaning, — "the grave, the state or realm of the dead." And it very naturally

attained this secondary sense. In Palestine, as in most other countries, the bodies of deceased persons were either buried or placed in natural or artificial caves, caverns, tombs. In either case the corpse, the dead person, was below the surface of the earth, and therefore in Sheol, the under-world. In itself, *Sheol* does not mean "grave;" but as the grave is in Sheol, it sometimes significantly took the name, — a part expressed by the whole. All the dead were, and all the living were soon to be, in the same lower realm, in Sheol. In thirty-one instances in the Old Testament the word is very properly rendered *grave;* and a similar rendering in other passages might give us a better idea of the original.

All the dead were in Sheol, but none of them experienced pain or pleasure. Like shadows, they saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing, thought, did nothing. Solomon said (Eccl. ix. 10): "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work or device or wisdom or knowledge in Sheol, whither thou goest." Perfect quiet, silence, and indifference reign supreme. Yet in one passage of Scripture, in the figurative language of poetry, a momentary shiver of animation is excited in the dead. When a mighty king of Babylon died and entered Sheol, the event was of such thrilling interest that it was reported (Isa. xiv. 9, 10):—

"Sheol is in commotion on account of thee,
To meet thee at thy coming;
It stirreth up before thee the shades, all the mighty of the earth.
It arouseth from their thrones all the kings of the nations.
They all accost thee, and say,
Art thou become weak as we?
Art thou become like us?
Thy pomp is brought down to the grave,
And the sound of thy harps.
Vermin have become thy couch,
And earth-worms thy covering.
How art thou fallen from heaven!
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How art thou cast down to the ground,
Thou that didst trample on the nations!"[1]

Of course this is not to be taken as a literal description; but it contains a glimpse of the ancient notions of Sheol. A great event stirs its weak and quiet ghosts into commotion, to sink again into their usual stupor, from which only a poet's pen can arouse them.

Sheol being the home of the dead, dying was sometimes called "going down to Sheol." This, to an aged person burdened with decrepitude and unable to enjoy the activities of life, was rather a pleasant prospect. It seemed like lying down in peace and lapsing into perfect repose. But to the

[1] Noyes's Translation.

young, just beginning to taste the sweet joys of earth, to the middle-aged with life's work only half done, and even to the elderly whose minds were harassed by recollections of their evil deeds, dying — going to Sheol — appeared to be the worst of all calamities, the very king of terrors. The patriarch Jacob, believing his dear son Joseph had been slain by ferocious beasts, said (Gen. xxxvii. 35), "I shall go down to Sheol, to my son, mourning." The idea is, the darling son is in Sheol, and grief for his early death will bring the father down to the same joyless realm. In itself death was not an evil, but the circumstances attending death were, in this and many another case, very melancholy. This is the first passage in the Bible in which Sheol is mentioned; and it certainly does not here mean "the place of punishment of the wicked after the final judgment." Instead, it means, as it is rendered, "the grave." Similar language is employed in speaking of the possible death of Benjamin, the other son of beloved Rachel. When his other sons insisted on taking Benjamin with them to Egypt, Jacob said to them (Gen. xlii. 38), "If any mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol!" In other words, the death of the son would be a fatal blow to the father; he would die of grief. Not death, but an untimely death, is the sad event anticipated. And this thought throws light on the statement of the

Psalmist: "The wicked shall be turned into Sheol, and all the nations that forget God." The sinful shall not live to ripe longevity, and depart in peace; he shall die untimely and perhaps by violence. The same destiny awaits ungody nations; they are swept into the gulf of ruin, and disappear. It is the law of God and the order of nature, that sin should shorten life.

Sheol appears to have had still another meaning. In the sense of "grave," Sheol being a realm of darkness, joylessness, and foul corruption, the word was sometimes and very naturally used to designate a miserable condition. Hence Jonah (ii. 2) calls the stomach of the fish in which he was so miserably imprisoned, "the belly of Sheol." On one occasion, when in great affliction, King David said (Ps. cxvi. 3), "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Sheol gat hold upon me: I found sorrow and trouble." He felt as badly as a dying man. Again, alluding probably to the same depressed condition, he says (Ps. lxxxvi. 13), "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol," and this, too, before his death. It was not a place, but a condition, from which he was delivered. In speaking of the debasing influence of the "strange woman," it is said (Prov. ix. 18), "Her guests are in the depths of Sheol," — as low as men can be.

These are the three meanings of the word *Sheol:* (1) The under-world; (2) The grave or realm of the

dead; (3) The miserable condition of a wicked person in the present life. The name may have had some other shade of figurative sense; but as the writers of the Old Testament had apparently no faith in human immortality, they could not and did not speak of Sheol as "the place of punishment of the wicked after the general judgment." They knew of no such place, and hence they had no name for such a place. The general opinion, or rather feeling of the ancient Jews was without doubt accurately expressed in Job vii. 9: "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to Sheol shall come up no more." Death was the finality; there was nothing beyond. But whatever Sheol was, it was or is to be put out of existence. God is reported to have said through the pen of Hosea (xiii. 14), "O Sheol, I will be thy destruction." This ends the thing, and exhausts the subject. There is no word in the Hebrew Old Testament that means hell as a place of torment after the general judgment. It is true the word *hell* occurs thirteen times in the revised Old Testament. The reason given by the revisers for retaining the ugly word is that its meaning is so obvious that it can lead to no misunderstanding. For example, (Jonah ii. 2) "Out of the belly of hell, cried I." No one can suppose that this means anything but the belly of the "great fish." So in Isa. xiv. 9, "Hell from beneath is moved to meet thee

at thy coming," the language is so manifestly figurative that no one can be misled. The truth is, the ripest scholarship of the nineteenth century blots from the Old Testament the idea of hell as a place of torment.

In God's dealings with the chosen people in ancient times, the policy of retribution was in full operation. Great and precious promises were made to the righteous, and terrible punishments were threatened for the wicked; but both the rewards and the chastisements were earthly and temporal. The blessings for virtue were peace and prosperity, health and longevity, a good name and true friends, and in time of trouble, the presence and assistance of the Lord. The penalties for persistent sin were the withdrawal of these favors, and the infliction of famine, pestilence, war, defeat, captivity, and bondage in a foreign land. All these are mentioned many times in the Old Testament; but it does not contain a single distinct enunciation of joys or sorrows after death, for the righteous or the wicked. The results of this policy are related in the melancholy pages of Jewish history; and that this was the stern policy of the Jewish dispensation, no candid reader of the Bible can doubt. No Sheol punishment is hinted at, except, if at all, as an affair of the present life.

This is a significant, a remarkable, fact; and in view of it an honest man can hardly refrain from inquiring: If there is a place for the punishment of

the wicked after the general judgment, from which there is no escape possible, and if the large majority of mankind — the wicked and all the nations that forget God — were ever in imminent danger of being thrust into the fearful place, and if any amount of warning to flee from the wrath to come could have availed to induce some, even though a few, to repent and escape, why were not the Hebrew prophets inspired frequently to mention the awful place, and plainly depict its eternal anguish? Why did our Father maintain entire reticence on this all-important subject for four thousand years, and thus permit hundreds of millions of His children, whom a timely warning might have frightened into obedience, to sin away the last day of grace and sink to everlasting woe? Only one plausible answer can be given: There is no place for the punishment of the wicked after their death, and there is no endless perdition in store for any soul. We distinctly warn our children of every danger to which they are exposed; and God is better than we. He has, even in the Old Testament.

VIII.

HADES.

"In hell [Hades] he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." — LUKE xvi. 23.

FAILING to find in the Old Testament any name for the place "of punishment of the wicked after the general judgment," we turn to the New. As has already been shown, *Sheol*, the only Hebrew word ever rendered *hell*, signifies (1) the underworld, all the space below the surface of the earth; (2) the grave, — the quiet, silent, painless, joyless resting-place of the dead; and (3) a miserable condition of the body or mind. Finding, further, that no inspired writer, from Moses to Malachi, gives any assurance that any person will go to heaven after death, and that the only inference to be deduced from the Prophets is that all persons must at last descend into the peace and rest of Sheol, — we go to the New Testament for more light.

In the interval of time between the age of Malachi and the age of Matthew, the Jewish nation experienced sad reverses and great changes. It had been ruled by Persia, Greece, and Rome, and had

learned something of the religion, theology, mythology, and philosophy of each of these nations. It had felt the thrill of that awaking age that gave to the world Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; and its people had learned to read, speak, and write the copious and beautiful Greek language; above all, it had been blessed by the advent of the world's Redeemer. Of course, we may expect to find in the Christian Scriptures some things not taught in the Jewish. What, then, is the New Testament doctrine of hell? What is its name in Greek, where is it located, and what are its characteristics?

The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language, and in its text there are three words translated *hell* in our English version, — *Gehenna*, occurring twelve times; *Hades*, eleven times; and *Tartarus*, once: in all, twenty-four times. These are the only words in the Greek New Testament that are or can be rendered *hell*. Three different names are certainly enough to designate any one place; but it is passing strange that in a book written expressly, as some suppose, to tell us how Jesus came, taught, and died to save people from going to hell, the name of the awful place should be mentioned only two dozen times! Many a faithful clergyman has repeated the word more times in one sermon than it is found in all the writings of the Apostles. But the ominous words are in the Bible, and our chief concern at present is to ascertain

their import. What is, or was, Hades, the place in which the dead rich man in the parable was in torments?

In most of the printed Greek New Testaments the word *Hades* occurs in 1 Cor. xv. 55; but in the opinion of the best modern critics, the word which Saint Paul wrote was not *Hades*, but *thanate*, death; and believing this, the learned authors of the Revised Version translate the passage, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" Probably this is correct; and if so, Hades is mentioned but ten times in the New Testament.

In his speech on the memorable day of Pentecost, Saint Peter (Acts ii. 27, 31) twice quotes Ps. xvi. 10: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption." In the psalm the word rendered *hell* is *Sheol;* in Saint Peter's Greek translation it is *Hades.* In the mind of the Apostle, *Sheol* and *Hades* were one and the same. As already shown, *Sheol* never signifies *hell*, and of course *Hades* in these two instances does not mean *hell;* evidently it signifies *grave.* Saint Peter quotes the passage as a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ: "Thou wilt not leave my soul [*i. e.*, me] in the grave, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see [undergo the] corruption" incident to a buried corpse. From this Peter infers the resurrection of Jesus, and nothing more. Omitting these two instances as not hinting a hell, there remain

only nine passages in the New Testament in which *Hades* is rendered *hell.* What does it mean in these passages?

About B. C. 280 some seventy learned Jewish rabbis translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. We have this translation. It is called the Septuagint. In this version, in sixty-one of the sixty-five places in which *Sheol* occurs, it is rendered *Hades.* This fact shows that the learned men of that age supposed the two words had one and the same meaning. This Greek version of the Old Testament was in common use among the Jews in the days of Jesus, and was quoted by him and his Apostles, and thus approved as correct. Bearing in mind the fact that *Hades*, like *Sheol*, never has the meaning of the English word *hell*, we are prepared to examine and understand the eight other passages in which it occurs: —

Matt. xi. 23: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to Hades." When these words were spoken, Capernaum was a wealthy and flourishing city; but it had not literally been "exalted unto heaven." It was a wicked town, and hence destined to become small and miserable, but not literally to be "brought down to Hades." The manifest meaning is that the city was to be brought down from great prosperity to poverty and wretchedness. The terms *heaven* and *Hades* are used metaphorically; and there is not

the remotest allusion to the after-death location or condition of any human soul.

Matt. xvi. 18: "Thou art Peter [a rock], and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." The language is still figurative, and the allusion is to Hades as the grave, the realm of the dead. Death is the gate — all deaths are gates, entrances to the grave — to Hades. "Gates of Hades," therefore, means death. Death is represented as the enemy and destroyer of men and human institutions. It has swept away and consigned to oblivion many a religious sect, many a theory, church, city, and nation. But the Church of Christ was not to perish, not to be overthrown, but to live and flourish forever. This is evidently what Jesus meant, and all he meant. Hence this verse does not contain even an allusion to "the place of punishment of the wicked after the general judgment."

Luke x. 15: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to Hades." This statement is the same as that in Matt. xi. 23, which has already been quoted and explained.

"Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Acts ii. 27, 31.

"He [King David] spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in Hades, neither his flesh did see corruption." *Vide* Ps. xvi. 10.

These two passages have been commented upon already; but the exact fulfilment of the prophecy is worthy of notice. Jesus died on Friday, and was immediately placed in a tomb. But early on the following Sunday morning, without any taint of dissolution, he arose, and left the tomb, to live forevermore. This is the historical fact. The Apostle was trying to persuade the Jews that the crucified and risen Jesus was their promised Messiah; and his explanation of the words of King David must have convinced his candid hearers. Whatever word the Apostle used, it is quite evident that he was not thinking of *hell* in the orthodox sense of perdition.

1 Cor. xv. 55: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" As stated before, the revisers of the New Testament substituted *death* for *grave;* but as some may still believe that the original word was *Hades*, a few words of explanation may be needful. Having stated and elucidated the doctrine of the resurrection of all mankind from the grave, he closes with the triumphant exclamation, "O grave, or realm of death, where is thy victory? Thy prisoners are all gone, and thy dark domain is empty." There is no allusion to hell. In fact, Saint Paul never uses the word *Hades* in any of his epistles. Possibly he did not believe in hell.

Rev. i. 18: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of Hades and of death." We humbly confess

that as a whole we do not understand Saint John's Revelation; and we are inclined to believe that no one in modern times fully grasps all its deep meaning. To us the book seems like a grand panorama, in which the scenes are all striking, and some very beautiful; but not all are intelligible. Perhaps a person can be a real Christian and not comprehend all the mysterious visions seen in the isle of Patmos. It is clear, however, that in the passage above quoted, the speaker is our risen Lord. In his glorified state he has at least two keys, — that is, instrumentalities by which to unlock and open. One is the key of death, by which he has opened the solemn mystery of death, and shown to us its nature and operation. He came to abolish death, and bring to light life immortal. He said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Death is the sloughing off of the animal body; the spirit never dies. It has a spiritual body, and lives on forever. This is the revealment of Christ. The other opening instrumentality is the key of Hades. What does that mean? To our mind, the supposition that Hades is a close-walled prison, that its doors or gates are locked, that Christ is the janitor and has the key to unlock its "adamantine portals," is a theory that seems too unreasonable, materialistic, and absurd to be worthy of comment or serious thought. But the supposition that Hades is the realm of the dead, and that Christ by his resurrection opened the

imaginary Hadean world and left it open, — that he has, he is, the key, and that his going out of the tomb broke the bolt, "burst the bars," and disclosed the reality of a continuous and spiritual life for all the human race, — seems to us Scriptural, reasonable, and satisfactory; and we adopt it without further investigation.

Rev. vi. 8: "I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death; and Hades followed with him." This, of course, is figurative language. The pale horse, its rider, and their follower were not real things, but symbolical representations of future events. It is easy to suppose that they meant the pale disease, death that accompanies disease, and the grave or under-world that closes over the dead. That this is the meaning is evident from the context: "And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, hunger, death, and the beasts of the earth." There is no allusion to anything in a future life.

Rev. xx. 13, 14: "And the sea gave up the dead that was in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." In the chapter on the "Second Death," we shall give this startling dramatic scene a careful examination; but our present task is to find the meaning of *Hades*. It is however worthy of notice, that this is the last

passage in the Bible in which the word occurs, and it describes the last end of Hades. It is not, as some have supposed, a lake of fire, but a something outside of the lake and distinct from it, — a something that is to be cast into the lake of fire, and there lose its identity and cease to exist. It and its precursor, death, are to share the same fate, — extinction. This is a Scriptural doctrine. Death and the grave, the state of the dead, are transient. There was a time, before the earth was peopled, when neither existed; and there is a time coming when both will again cease to exist. Saint Paul asserts that "death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed," and all the dead be raised. There will then be no realm of the dead, no peopled under-world, no Hades. This is the promise of the Gospel and the hope of the Church.

In the ten passages quoted, it seems to us that no candid person can find even a hint that Hades is the name of the place for the endless punishment of the wicked after the final Judgment. But there is one passage more in which the word occurs; and in that solitary passage we must find, if at all, the proof that *Hades* is the Greek equivalent of *hell*, as *hell* is defined in our best dictionary. It is in the parable, or story, of the rich man and Lazarus.

Luke xvi. 23: "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Here perhaps the "missing link," the needful proof, may be found. The state-

ment is certainly very clear and concise. A rich man dies and is buried, but presently finds himself alive in Hades. Other living people are there, and with one of them he converses. He is in torment in a flame of fire. His tongue is parched and painful. He wants water, but there is no water within his reach. There is a cañon, or gulf, that bisects the place, and all the water is on the side opposite to him. He begs Abraham to send him some water — a drop, if no more — to cool his tongue; but the Patriarch says that such a thing should not and cannot be done. The curtain falls, and the burning victim is left there to suffer — "O Lord, how long?" In his Commentary, Dr. Adam Clarke says: "This is either a true story or a parable. If a true story, it tells what has been; if a parable, what may be." If this learned Methodist divine was right, the point is settled: Hades is the place of punishment of the wicked by fire. But before giving up the controversy, several facts should be considered.

1. This is the only passage in the Bible that speaks of Hades or Sheol as a place of punishment. These names occur more than seventy times; yet in no instance except this, is there any allusion to torment. If Hades is a penal realm, it can be proved only by this solitary passage. This is getting the subject down to a pretty fine point. If the *usus loquendi* of a word is worth considering, if there is

any force in numbers, the chances are seventy to one that Hades does not mean a place for punishment, and that the passage under consideration is not to be taken literally, but figuratively.

2. Even in this passage *Hades* indicates the under-world, the realm of the dead. "The rich man died and was buried; and in Hades he lifted up his eyes" and spake. There had been no resurrection and no general judgment. Alike he and Lazarus and Abraham were in Hades, and within speaking distance of each other. They were in the same realm, though separated by a deep chasm. This fact is not in accordance with Evangelical theology, but opposed to it.

3. Taken as a literal statement of what has been or may be, no moral can be deduced from the story, except perhaps that it is dangerous to be rich and indulge in luxuries, and that those who are poor, sick, and "full of sores" may hope to be carried to Abraham's bosom! There is no intimation that the poor man had, or the rich man had not, believed and been baptized, repented, prayed, been converted, born again, forgiven, or washed in the atoning blood of the Lamb. In neither of these ways does it urge us to "escape from hell and fly to heaven." Applied to individuals, it has no practical value, and is therefore, in this light, unworthy the lips of the great Teacher.

4. The idea that Hades is a place in which there

is torment was not known by the ancient Hebrew prophets, nor was it revealed by Christ. It was, however, believed before his birth, and appears to have been of pagan origin. It was a theory of the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. It is distinctly stated in the writings of Homer and Virgil, and alluded to in other ancient books. The size and shape of Hades are not definitely given by any author; but by collecting the statements of the poets and mythologists of the olden time, a tolerably distinct outline may be obtained. Hades, the realm of the dead, — not their bodies, but their ghosts or shadows, — is below the dark realms of Cimmeria and Erebus, in the cavernous bowels of the earth. It is a sloping plain, divided into two parts, the higher and the lower. The upper portion is Elysium, the Elysian fields, Paradise, — a beautiful and pleasant region, wherein dwell the worthy dead. The lower part is Tartarus, — a horrible region encircled by the black Cocytus, a river formed by the salt tears of the unworthy dead. Through this infernal region rolls flaming Phlegethon, a river of fire, in which are tormented the ghosts of the damned. This monstrous myth, it is said, originated in Egypt before the age of Moses; but as it was borne to other lands it was modified to suit the imaginations of the people by whom it was repeated. As tales of horror and woe are quite sure to be told far and near, to receive a patient if not an eager hearing, and to be regarded

as true by the ignorant, it is quite probable that, in common with other nations, many of the Jews in the first century of our era held this or a somewhat similar idea of Hades to be genuine truth. At the present time, however, very few intelligent Christians believe in such a place or such a doom for the "finally impenitent."

5. This, *Hades*, is the word, and the signification of the word, rendered *hell* in the passage under consideration. It is true that Jesus used this word; but the supposition that he believed the heathen myth to be a reality — believed that a certain dead man found himself in a flame of fire, and begged Abraham to send another dead man with water for his burning tongue — is not only utterly absurd, but disgusting. We cannot think that the Son of God believed in a pagan myth. We are obliged to suppose that he used a common word and a common notion, not to indorse the notion, but rather to express and emphasize an important truth, — the truth, perhaps, that the rich, proud, bigoted Jewish hierarchy was doomed to an awful and final fate, and that the Gentiles, poor in faith and hope, and sore with the evils of heathenism, were to be raised to the felicity of the Abrahamic faith. Evidently the story of the rich man and Lazarus is not an account of anything that has been or may be, but is a parable woven from the then current notions of the mythical Hades.

Thus it appears that not one of the ten passages of Scripture in which Hades occurs, was intended to reveal a place or condition of punishment for the wicked after the general judgment. In the Revised Version of the New Testament the word *hell* is not found in one of these passages, *Hades* being left unchanged. This is honest and fair. There may be a hell, a place of endless misery; but neither Sheol nor Hades is its Bible name. This is the decision of the ripest Christian scholarship of the nineteenth century.

A brief notice of one more passage properly belongs to this chapter: (2 Peter ii. 4) "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." This statement has not much bearing upon the subject we are considering. It is found in an epistle respecting whose authenticity there has long been no small doubt. It treats of sinning angels, a class of beings never alluded to by the Master, — persons in whose history we are not particularly interested. This is the only place in the Bible in which Tartarus is mentioned; and no argument of much weight can be sustained by a single and difficult text. Peter does not seem to regard Tartarus as a place of punishment, but rather as a prison in which certain angels are kept, not in fire but in darkness, until the time of judgment. If, as shown above, Hades is

a fictitious place, then Tartarus, the lower part of Hades, is also a fictitious and not a real locality. Finally, Tartarus is not relied upon as the Greek name of hell by anybody. The terrible Bible name of the realm of woe must be Gehenna, if it has a name; but the examination of that fearful appellative is reserved for the next chapter.

IX.

GEHENNA.

An evil tongue "defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell [*Gehenna*]." — JAMES iii. 6.

AS we commence the examination of the only other word in the Bible that is or can be rendered *hell*, our sense of responsibility becomes oppressive and almost appalling. If there is a place of interminable woe to which sinners are in danger of going, and if belief in such a realm lessens the danger of going thither, and we frame a plausible argument disproving the existence of such a world and doom, and even one soul is so misled by our logic as to be forever lost, we commit an unpardonable sin, — a crime that we shall never cease to regret. We are unwilling to perpetrate so great a wrong. Would it not be better for us to stop here and burn our manuscript, than to go on and so mislead or confuse unwary souls that they may blunder down to everlasting woe? Yes, certainly. We pause. But on reflection we perceive another aspect to this momentous subject. If the doctrine of unending sin and suffering is false; if it is but the hideous dream of superstí-

tion; if no soul ever was in danger of a destiny so terrible; if the Infinite Love is eventually to instruct, reform, purify, and save all mankind, — the glorious fact should be made known to every human being, that the Divine goodness may no longer be doubted, and that timid people may not sink down in despair and become insane through fear of such a wrath to come. Bearing in mind both of these considerations, let us reverently proceed.

We have already shown that, as used in the Bible, neither Sheol, Hades, nor that part of Hades called Tartarus, signifies hell. Only one other word in the Scriptures is or can be translated *hell*, and that word is *Gehenna*. It is not in the Old Testament, but it occurs twelve times in the New Testament; and in every instance it is rendered *hell*, even in the Revised Version. Here then is a name respecting whose meaning evangelical divines seem to have no doubt. But all Christendom has believed in some things that are now generally doubted, — ghosts and witches, for example; and it is not certain that even wise and pious men have yet arrived at a full knowledge of all truth. We cannot avoid asking, Who coined the ominous word *Gehenna?* What was at first meant by it? And what change in significance, if any, has it undergone? But before trying to answer these questions, let us notice a few facts: —

1. It is a remarkable fact that *Gehenna* occurs only twelve times in the entire Greek New Testa-

ment. This book has as much reading matter as a dozen long sermons; it contains the "gospel, the power of God unto salvation;" it is our light, guide, and standard; and it reveals all man needs to know about his duty and destiny. If Jesus and his first disciples believed in a place for everlasting punishment called Gehenna, and if they deemed a belief in such a place essential to salvation, it is very strange the name does not more frequently appear in the writings of the Apostles. Believers in this doctrine are not often so reticent. Few other religious books of its size, written by Evangelical Christians in modern times, are so nearly destitute of a name for the realm of unending woe. To a candid mind this fact brings a doubt that Orthodoxy cannot remove: "Perhaps the inspired writers did not know that *Gehenna* meant *hell!*"

2. The New Testament contains twenty-seven books; and it is a remarkable fact that *Gehenna* is found in only four of them, — namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and James. Neither Jude in his brief letter, nor Peter in his two epistles, nor John the beloved disciple in his Gospel, his Revelation, or his three epistles, nor Paul the Rabbi in his thirteen, penned the word even once. Luke wrote an extended account of the Acts — that is, the sayings and doings — of the Apostles, yet found no occasion to use the fearful name. Paul affirms that he "shunned not to declare all the counsel of God," yet he did not

mention Gehenna. What does this mean? What can it mean, except that in the estimation of the apostolic writers it was not a word of any great importance in the Christian religion, and was not the name of a place to which sinners were in danger of going after death?

3. So far as we know, Jesus in his three years' ministry uttered the word only eleven times, — on an average, less than once in three months. If his mission was to save sinners from a place called hell, and if he understood Gehenna to be the proper name of that place, it is passing strange that he did not speak of it more frequently. Is not his reticence a manifest intimation that he regarded it as a word of no special importance? But what is still more remarkable, Jesus used the word on only four occasions: once, in saying that he who called his brother a fool was in danger of Gehenna; again, in saying that it is better to part with an offending (diseased) eye, hand, or foot, than to retain it and be cast into Gehenna; again, in exhorting his disciples to fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna; and again, in rebuking the malicious scribes and Pharisees. On two of these four occasions he was addressing the chosen Twelve, and only once did he mention the damnation of Gehenna. This reduces the matter to a point so fine that we are tempted to infer that the Gospel of Christ is not a Gehenna religion, and the New Testament not a

Gehenna book, but that it is a Gospel and a book minus hell.

4. In several passages of Scripture, Gehenna is alluded to as a place or condition whose prominent characteristic is fire. From A. D. 500 to A. D. 1500 — a thousand dreary years — almost the entire Christian Church believed it to be literal fire; but this, nearly all educated Protestants of the present age discredit. The fire has gone out, and a great change in public opinion has come about; yet there is just as strong Scripture proof that the fire is literal as that the place is literal. The two are inseparable, and each must share the fate of the other. Either both are real, or both are fictions. We must go back to literal fire, or give up the idea that Gehenna is a local habitation.

5. The history of the word is worthy of consideration. *Gehenna* is the Greek way of spelling and pronouncing two Hebrew words that signify the "Valley of Hinnom." This phrase occurs thirteen times in the Old Testament; but it is never translated *hell*. It was a pleasant valley near Jerusalem, and probably received its name from one of its ancient owners or occupants, — a man by the name of Hinnom. It is mentioned four times in the book of Joshua, as a part of the boundary line between the territories of Judah and Benjamin, — namely, Josh. xv. 8, and xviii. 16; and no one then dreamed that the peaceful and beautiful valley would eventually

lend its name to hell. But strange changes took place. In the eastern part of this valley, in a place called Topheth or Tophet, — a name that probably means "music grove," — King Solomon, contrary to the Mosaic law, consecrated a shrine to Moloch, an imaginary heathen god. During the reign of the idolatrous kings that succeeded Solomon, the horrid orgies of pagan worship were here celebrated. Human sacrifices were made, and two wicked kings, — Ahaz and Manasseh, — and probably many other persons caused their own children to "pass through fire to Moloch;" that is, to be burned alive to appease or propitiate the cruel god. In a later age, the pious King Josiah abolished these horrid rites; and, to prevent their recurrence, he desecrated the Valley of Hinnom by causing the filth and garbage of Jerusalem to be carted into it. Thus the pleasant place was defiled and rendered unfit for public gatherings. In addition to this desecration, and to prevent the rotting carcasses of dead animals and the wormy heaps of filth from breeding pestilence, they were set on fire, and for ages the fire was kept burning. Speaking of this fire, which in a calm day only smouldered, Isaiah (xxx. 33) says: "The breath of the Lord [the wind], like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it;" and then it burned fiercely. Thus the Valley of Hinnom became as foul and loathsome, and its associations as revolting, as anything that can be imagined.

This is all the information about the place that can be gleaned from the Old Testament; but in all probability, its name, by the laws of mental association and linguistic change, gradually became the synonyme or descriptive appellation of whatever was repulsive and horrible, — such as, for example, the awful punishment of sinners by war, pestilence, famine, and conflagration. And after the Jews had been taught by the heathen to believe in a place of future punishment, they very naturally and properly gave it the worst name they could think of; and there being in pure Hebrew no word suitable for such a realm, by the aid of a little Greek they coined a new one, and christened the dismal abode Ge Henna.

Now, in what sense did our Saviour use this new word? We shudder, as we call to mind the disgusting credulity and utter heartlessness of the degraded idolaters, who burned alive their helpless children in the Valley of Hinnom; we detest and loathe the barbarous spirit and principles that would tolerate such fiendish atrocity; must we believe that Jesus in using the word meant to teach us that God will forever burn millions of His helpless children in Gehenna? Is there no way to escape a conclusion so horrible? Is it not possible honestly to believe that in the mouth of Jesus the word had a figurative, a secondary, and less harsh meaning? To us this question is of special interest. We want to respect and love God with our whole heart; but how can we,

if He causes millions of His children, our brothers and sisters, to agonize forever in the fire of Gehenna, which His breath, like a stream of brimstone kindles into a flaming storm? When we think of their torment, and call to mind the many devout men who have believed in it, and feel a twinge of fear that it may be true, we are driven to the desperate verge of either doubting God's existence or denying His goodness. If the doctrine is true, we can fear and tremble, but cannot love Him and be glad. What shall we do? Father, forgive us, and help us to understand Thy word. With this prayer in our hearts, and the facts in our mind as above stated, let us carefully and critically study the twelve passages of Scripture in which Gehenna is mentioned.

Matt. v. 29, 30: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna."

Matt. xviii. 9: "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna fire."

Mark ix. 43–48: "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed,

than having two hands to go into Gehenna, — into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into Gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

It should be noticed that these are parallel passages, — Matthew and Mark quoting the same sayings of the Master; Luke and John either forgetting them, or deeming other matters of more importance, — and that these six, or rather three, statements are mere variations of one idea, one truth; namely, it is better to part with an offending eye, hand, or foot, than by retaining it to be cast into Gehenna. Thus six of the twelve times in which *Gehenna* occurs in the New Testament melt down into one; and this one expression is not so much a solemn warning to great sinners of imminent danger, as it is friendly advice to his dear disciples. The literal meaning is obvious, — it is better for a person having a badly diseased eye, hand, or foot, to suffer its amputation, and thus regain health, than to retain it, suffer by it, let it poison the whole

body and ultimate in a painful death. The moral instruction is equally apparent, — it is better suddenly and entirely to break away from demoralizing companions, habits, usages, opinions, however pleasant, than to retain them and by them be dragged down to ruin. This is a valuable lesson, and worthy of being taught by the Saviour. It was then and there needed by his Jewish disciples, to whom the Mosaic religion was dear as the apple of the eye; but from which they must break away, or not be Christians, and not escape the fiery trials about to consume their nation. And not only the Twelve, but we also, before we can enter that kingdom of God which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," must put from us all things that offend.

Was this what Jesus meant? Did he indulge in figurative language, or are his statements to be taken literally? If they are, then Gehenna is a literal place, and in it are literal dead human bodies, burned by literal fire, and gnawed by literal worms. This is a materialism so gross and ghastly, that very few educated men at the present day believe in it. Practically, the worms have died, the fire gone out, the place vanished, and the theory of the resurrection and immortality of human corpses been abandoned. Scarcely anybody tries to believe in the literal interpretation.

There are other difficulties. One might guess that

impenitent sinners are cast, soul and body, into Gehenna, to be burned up, annihilated. Such a fate would be infinitely better than endless agony; but the texts furnish not even a hint of conditional immortality. Or, one might surmise that the unfortunates are cast into Gehenna fire to be burned and wormed for ever; but the duration of their stay is not mentioned. The fire will not, cannot, be quenched; the worm does not die; but for aught we are told to the contrary, the victims may be taken out the next second after they are cast in. Possibly too, the baptism in fire may so purify the doomed that they will immediately become fit to be raised to a higher life. In every respect, these statements of Jesus fail to support the doctrine of endless misery. Our reason compels us to adopt the figurative interpretation given above; and thus, six of the passages containing the sinister word slip away without giving an intimation that Gehenna is a place of punishment for the wicked after the final judgment.

Matt. x. 28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

Luke xii. 4, 5: "My friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear Him, which after he hath killed hath power

to cast into Gehenna." Theologians are not agreed respecting the meaning of these words. Much criticism has been lavished upon them, and still, to many minds, their import is not clear. If Jesus intended to teach the doctrine of eternal punishment, on this occasion, it is strange he did not enunciate it more distinctly. On a subject so momentous, great plainness of speech is to be expected. This much however is patent: Jesus told his disciples, his friends, not to be afraid of those who could only kill the mortal body, but to fear, revere, a power that could do more; that could destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Some commentators think he meant, fear not the Jewish hierarchy, but the Roman government. The Jews might commit murder, but the Roman government reserved to itself alone the right to execute criminals, and an occasional homicide was not so much to be dreaded, as the pitiless persecution of the imperial power. A hundred years later, such a warning would have been timely, but when the remark was made, the Jews were the most bitter and dangerous enemies of the Christians. Other critics affirm, and with better reason, that the meaning is, fear God rather than man; or as Paul puts it, "we ought to obey God rather than man." This advice is in accord with all the teachings of Christ; and it appears to have been the rule of the Apostles as they went forth to "preach the Gospel to every creature." He who

shrinks from this rule has not the spirit of Christ, and is not worthy the name of Christian.

If we were asked why we should revere and obey God rather than man, our hearts would reply, "because He is better, wiser, and stronger than we are." Jesus gave another reason; — God can inflict more severe punishments. Man can only murder us; God can cause us to endure greater evils; war, famine, pestilence, bondage, and being destroyed body and soul in Gehenna. This is what Jesus said, and this is true. No one can doubt the ability of the Almighty to destroy a dead body or a soul, when and where He pleases; but it is difficult to find any reason for taking a corpse to Gehenna to destroy it. Chemical decomposition very rapidly destroys, changes into other forms, the bodies of all that die. Besides, a dead body is entirely devoid of sensation, and it is of very small consequence when, where, or how it "returns to the dust as it was." We are unwilling to suppose that Jesus made a remark so vapid as to say that God is able to take a lifeless human form to a spiritual Gehenna, and there destroy it! There must be a meaning more profound than this.

The destruction of the soul is a weightier matter. In the six passages respecting the offending eye, hand, and foot, nothing is said about punishment, and the fair inference is, that the wicked were cast into Gehenna to be burned up, — that is, annihilated. In the passage under consideration, this inference

ripens into a certainty. Gehenna is a place for destruction; and in it God is able to destroy both the body and the soul of a sinner. When a body is destroyed, it ceases to be a body, and when a soul is destroyed, it ceases to be a soul; each is extinct, annihilate. But annihilation is not painful; it is the end of pain and woe. Of course God does not indulge in the cruelty of tormenting or permitting to be tormented, those whom He is about to destroy. In this view of the case, Gehenna is the place for putting an end to punishment. It may be said that God does not do all that He is able to do; but if He never has destroyed, and never will destroy a sinner, then the advice, "fear God because He is able to destroy both body and soul," is utterly destitute of force or point. Jesus must have meant that God actually does do what is indicated by the words he uttered. Did he really teach the unphilosophical doctrine of the annihilation of the finally impenitent? Very few Christians believe this doctrine. We cannot. Then what did he mean? It is evident that the more we try to give his words, in this instance, a literal interpretation, the more we get into doubt and darkness. We are obliged to go back to first principles; — to believe that our Lord teaches us to fear, revere, obey the mighty God, rather than weak and often wicked man; and to suppose that the reason assigned is stated in figurative language which possibly, at this late day, we

may not fully understand. One thing is certain; he did not affirm or intimate that Gehenna is a realm of endless punishment. This is enough for our present purpose. These two passages fail to sustain the evangelical notion of hell.

Matt. v. 22: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of Gehenna fire." There seems to be but little difference in the magnitude of these three misdemeanors. The first is anger, the second is contempt, the third is vituperation. Neither is a crime nor a great sin. If the three are nearly alike in turpitude, the danger in each case must be about the same. It is unreasonable to suppose, that a person guilty of the first or second is in danger of an earthly, temporal penalty only, while he who is guilty of the third is in danger of endless punishment in hell fire. The passage, however, contains not even a hint of the duration of either of the penalties. For aught said to the contrary, the penalty by Gehenna fire may be instantaneous destruction. There must be reason in religion. It may be that by Judgment, Jesus meant a lower Jewish court of justice; by Council, the higher court, the Sanhedrim; and by Gehenna fire, the greatest punishment that Jews or Romans could inflict; but the point is of little practical importance. To our

mind, the passage resembles the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, — it has one idea expressed in three ways with a kind of crescendo emphasis. The lesson for us is manifest and impressive: — Every person who indulges in either of these three faults, or in any other offence against good morals or manners, has entered the broad road that leads to destruction, and is in danger of becoming a great sinner, and of suffering a severe penalty. Shun the beginning of wrong; indulge not in any, even the least, misdemeanor. Our Lord does not intimate that the fire is in the spirit world, or that it will burn the sinner after death; and we are at liberty to infer that all three of the dangers are of penalties inflicted in the present stage of existence. Thus another proof-text fails to support the theory that Gehenna is the place of punishment for those who die in their sins.

James iii. 5, 6: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of Gehenna." The Greek text of this passage is somewhat obscure, and the translation is faulty; but it is clear that in the mind of its author Gehenna fire is not literal fire, but a something that burns in this world, sets on fire the fleshly tongue, sets on fire the course or wheel of nature, and damages, — puts out of order, — the sinner before his death. Whether

St. James did or did not believe in a literal lake of fire in the spirit realm is not apparent. He merely employs the then current superstitious notions of Gehenna, to emphasize the vileness and pernicious influence of a foul, unbridled tongue. As he does not again allude to Gehenna, it is fair to infer that he did not deem it the name of a real realm of woe.

Matt. xxiii. 15: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of Gehenna than yourselves." This allusion to Gehenna is so manifestly figurative that little comment is needed. If it is a parent and has children, it is not a place but a person. But in the Scriptures, the words, "son of, children of," etc., often indicate, not relationship, but resemblance. James and John were called "Boanerges," — that is, sons of thunder. Jesus said, the malicious Jews were "of their father the devil." The phrase "sons of Belial" is not an affirmation that a person of that name ever existed, but only that the men so stigmatized were worthless fellows. So the phrase "child of Gehenna" is not equivalent to an assertion that there is a lake of fire and brimstone; it simply means that the proselyte alluded to, was like the Valley of Hinnom, foul, defiled, corrupt. Whether Gehenna is an imaginary or real place, the statement made by Jesus has the same point and force.

Matt. xxiii. 33: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Gehenna?" This is certainly a terse and fearful inquiry. At first sight, it seems to be in perfect harmony with the theory that hell is a place of punishment for the finally impenitent, and the word "damnation" is in itself alarming. But the strength of the passage as a proof-text is weakened by several considerations:—

1. This is the only verse in the Bible that contains the phrase "damnation of Gehenna." If it signifies endless perdition, it is very remarkable that Jesus and his Apostles did not use it frequently. One solitary sentence, and that one a question, is a very small foundation on which to build a theory so tremendous. Five hundred times would be none too many to alarm and warn those in danger of eternal woe. Possibly this is not the meaning of the phrase.

2. Some learned Orthodox men do not indorse the translation. Drs. Campbell and Noyes render the phrase "the punishment of Gehenna." In the Revised New Testament it is rendered "the judgment of Gehenna." If this does not change the sense, it is certainly a relief to be rid of the frightful, vulgar word "damnation." We are very glad to learn that our Saviour never used it. We think it would be a benefit to the Church and the world to drop it out of our language.

3. The passage contains no information respecting the nature, intensity, or duration of the doom. It may be very brief; it may be instantaneous; it may be destruction; and as Jesus once spoke of both body and soul being destroyed in Gehenna, the punishment alluded to in all probability was destruction. This thought is also a great relief to our mind, because it abnegates the awful evangelical interpretation.

4. Anyhow, it is not certain that Jesus used the word *Gehenna* as the name of a place of punishment for the wicked after their death; nor is it certain that he believed in such a place. But it is certain that he distinctly foresaw the calamities about to fall on Jerusalem and the Jewish nation; that he foresaw the siege, the fighting factions in the city, the famine, the fire, the destruction of the town and temple, and the dispersion of the entire nation. These awful scenes would be a Gehenna on a gigantic scale. He also foresaw that the scribes, Pharisees, and nearly all the people would go on in sin to the bitter end. Hence it was natural for him to say to them, "How can ye" — equivalent to "Ye cannot" — "escape the Gehenna judgment and punishment," — the wrath about to come? We believe this was the thought that suggested the words under consideration, and that there is in the passage not even an allusion to an after-death, spiritual Valley of Hinnom. And this, to our mind, is a candid and reasonable conclusion.

Every one of the twelve passages that contain the word *Gehenna* has now been quoted and critically examined. We do not deny that a person who believes and intends to believe in an endless hell, and who desires to find Bible proof of his doctrine, may, in some of these texts, discover the outlines of his theory, and have his belief strengthened thereby. His mental training and confirmed habits of thought would lead to this result. But we do claim that a fair, manly, and reasonable explanation of these twelve texts can be made without admitting that even in a single instance *Gehenna* denotes a realm of eternal woe. There may be such a realm, but if our reasoning is correct, neither Sheol, Hades, Tartarus, nor Gehenna is its Bible name; and the fact that the sacred Scriptures contain no name for such a place compels the conclusion that no such place exists in the universe. There is no vast cavern hot with burning brimstone, and used as a prison for lost souls, in the earth, sun, moon, or stars; and the thought of a place so horrid, so frightful to the weak-minded, so dishonorable to the good Father, ought to be eliminated from the human mind; and unless the signs of the times are deceptive, the process of elimination is now rapidly going on.

X.

ANNIHILATION.

"The Lord preserveth all them that love Him, but all the wicked will He destroy." — Ps. cxlv. 20.

HERE is the classification found in so many passages of Scripture; but the fate of the wicked is described by a word hitherto unnoticed in these pages, — "all the wicked will He *destroy*." Those who revere, love, and obey God are the righteous; and they are to be preserved, saved. All the rest of mankind are the wicked; and they are to be destroyed, put out of existence, annihilated.

We may not be able to decide in every instance to which class each of our acquaintances belongs; but we are quite sure the two classes exist. God is the absolute Good; and those who truly love goodness, honesty, charity, justice, right, love God, and they are to be preserved. Those who do not possess these virtues are the wicked, and they are sooner or later to be destroyed. If their destruction means their annihilation, Universalism is not true.

"The Lord preserveth all them that love Him." This is in harmony with His character, and with our idea of right. They ought to be preserved to bless

the world; and they are. God is their Shepherd, Guardian, Keeper, Helper, all the time. Their preservation is not miraculous, but natural, general, continuous. Their virtues are a charm that drives away the evil and attracts the good. An inward impulse leads them to seek and associate with the virtuous, and there find safety and protection. Thus, by the law and will of God, those who love Him are preserved. But there are some, we fear many, who do not love the Lord, — who knowingly, willingly, and wilfully do wrong. These are the wicked, and all of them God will destroy. This is the result of, and the punishment for, their wickedness. Many inspired men solemnly testify that this is their certain and awful destiny. Job (xxi. 30) says: "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction." Solomon says (Prov. xxix. 1): "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Malachi (iv. 1) says: "Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts; it shall leave neither root nor branch." This seems an entire and final end of them. Jesus said (Matt. vii. 13): "Wide is the gate and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Again, Jesus said (Matt. x. 28): "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather

fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." Saint Paul, speaking of those who do not obey the Gospel (2 Thess. i. 9), says they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." As God is omnipresent, banishment from Him must be annihilation. Both body and soul must cease to exist. There are other passages; but these are sufficient to show that the destruction of the wicked is a plain Bible doctrine. We may not deny or doubt it; but what does their destruction imply?

To *destroy* means "to put out of existence;" we can scarcely imagine any other definition. When a thing is destroyed, it ceases to exist. When a house is destroyed by fire, it vanishes from existence. When Sodom was destroyed by volcanic agency, both the city and the site on which it stood disappeared. When a soul is destroyed, it does not remain in the realm of reality. Reasoning in this natural way some candid Christians have been led to renounce both the doctrine of endless misery and the doctrine of universal salvation, and to believe in conditional immortality, — the righteous to live forever in heaven, the finally impenitent to be annihilated. The people called Adventists believe and openly advocate this doctrine; and destruction is so much more merciful than immortal suffering that not a few tender-hearted members of evangelical churches are said to be inclined to this belief. It is said the number of

Annihilationists is increasing; and there are very plausible reasons for this increase.

The best way to dispose of a thing utterly worthless and repulsive is to destroy it, — put it out of existence. A soul utterly depraved — a soul that neither man nor God can reform and render holy, beautiful, and happy — is entirely worthless and repulsive; and both wisdom and goodness demand that it be put out of existence. God is perfectly wise and good; and therefore all such souls, if there are any, will He destroy. As has already been shown, the Bible distinctly, repeatedly, and emphatically asserts that the wicked are to be destroyed; and we must believe this, or repudiate the Word of God. Christians are not willing to throw away the sacred Scriptures; and hence some of them adopt the theory of annihilation. Frequently the punishment threatened is of a destructive nature, — is by fire; and fire consumes and destroys. If a tree is burned up, trunk, roots, and branches, no trace of it as a tree remains. In like manner, if a person were burned up, body and soul, no trace of his personality would remain. And besides, so far as we can judge, if a spiritual being were subjected to ceaseless, hopeless, and extreme agony, as by fire, it would in the lapse of ages gradually lose sensation and intelligence, and finally become extinct. The bare thought of unending agony is painful. We are unable to perceive how such a doom for the wicked could be any benefit to

them or to the saved, or how it could redound to God's glory. We can hardly refrain from feeling that an eternal hell filled with ceaseless misery seems like a foul stain, a hideous blotch, on creation, and an awful reproach to the great Creator, — a dark cloud without any silver lining, — a frightful, painful mystery whose cold shadow dims the light of heaven itself. Hence good men are glad to find any plausible theory through which to escape from believing in the doctrine of endless misery. Conditional immortality is such a theory. The annihilation of a sinner would be a great and eternal loss, but it would be infinitely better than eternal pain. We can approve and even applaud the destruction of an irreclaimable, worthless soul. Admit this theory to be correct, and all the fiery threatenings of the Bible would be literally true. Far off, perhaps, but surely, a time would come when there would be no sin or sorrow, but God would be all in all. Influenced by these considerations, many worthy Christians are verging toward a belief in the ultimate annihilation of the "finally impenitent."

But is this doctrine true? Is it in accordance with reason and revelation? Has God called into existence millions of intelligent, sensitive, spiritual beings that under favorable circumstances might have been fitted to "glorify and enjoy Him forever," only to annihilate them? Is it certain that any human soul is so debased that Infinite Grace cannot bring about

its regeneration? Has any one of us fathomed the plans and purposes of the Eternal? Is it not more wise and safe to doubt the meaning of words than to doubt the Almighty Love? We do not *know* that the doctrine of annihilation is true; we can have no *faith* in a calamity so dreadful; and, for what seem good reasons, we do not believe in conditional immortality.

1. The absolute annihilation of anything is unphilosophical and unthinkable. There is no proof that any particle of matter has ever been put out of existence. Burn a piece of wood, for example, and still — as ash, moisture, and gas — every ounce, every atom of it remains. The form changes; the elements endure. Every grain of our bodies is as old as the earth, and as indestructible as her solid rocks. Further, science informs us that no force, power, or agent is ever lost. The caloric that warms our homes or drives our locomotives radiates and becomes latent, but still exists. The electricity that flashes along the clouds with such terrible swiftness is not hurrying into non-existence, but merely changing its location. The force that moves the world is inexhaustible and enduring; and the fountain of life is ever flowing and never exhausted. Everything goes round and round in a circle. The dust returns to the dust as it was; and the spirit returns to God who gave it, not to stop, but to begin a new journey. Still further, the human soul seems to be a monad, an indivisible point, an absolute unit. Thought,

feeling, will, memory, seem to spring from a common centre; and as that indivisible, central unit cannot be diffused and lost, personal immortality must remain intact and eternal.

2. The annihilation of an intelligent, spiritual being would be a waste, a loss, not in harmony with the laws of nature or the economy of God. The soul of an infant rightly trained can become a perfect man, an angel, an archangel, an ornament to heaven, a glory to God, forever; what an immense and eternal loss would be its extinction! The same sublime possibilities exist in every infant born into the world. Each has a germ of goodness and greatness that can be developed into Divine excellence. This was the reason why God so loved the sinful world as to send His Son to be its Saviour. It is not certain that any person loses this germ so long as he draws breath. It is sung and believed and taught by all Christians that

> "While the lamp holds out to burn,
> The vilest sinner may return."

Saint Paul was once "the chief of sinners;" John Bunyan was once a profane and godless wretch; yet they became stars of the first magnitude. And it is not reasonable to suppose that God will permit any slip of spiritual life, capable of being cultured into such foliage and fruit, to perish. We are persuaded that if He can, He will train all His sons and daughters so as to make them diadems in His crown

of glory. We know not the length and strength of God's saving power; and we dare not affirm that He cannot save even the lowest and worst of His children. "Our God is a God of salvation, and unto Him belong the issues of death."

3. *Immortal* means "not mortal, not liable to die." An immortal being cannot die. Man is the offspring of the immortal God, and by heredity partakes the immortal nature of his Father. The essence of our souls is divine, — is of God; and hence it can no more perish than He can perish. Moreover, all souls are essentially alike. If some are mortal, all are; if some are immortal, all are. Hence not only saints but sinners will certainly live forever.

4. The doctrine of conditional immortality cannot therefore be true, or have any real support in the Bible rightly understood. The Scriptures are mainly devoted to affairs in this world; and the destruction of which it speaks is a thing of earth, a change of material forms. For example, the wicked antediluvians were destroyed by a deluge. Their destruction as inhabitants of earth was complete and entire. No one of them was ever seen again in human shape. But the water did not drown their souls. There is no proof, no hint, that their spirits were annihilated. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. As cities, they vanished from the face of the earth. So, too, Babylon, Nineveh, and all the ancient nations were destroyed; but we are not, in a solitary text,

informed that the spirits of these wicked people were or were to be annihilated. The writers of the Old Testament did not realize that man is an immortal being; and hence to them the death and dissolution of the material body seemed the final end, and they sometimes called it destruction. In the Revised Version, however, destruction is sometimes expressed by a softer word.[1] The New Testament writers followed the style of the Prophets, using the word *destruction* in the sense of ruin, overthrow, or death. Jesus and his Apostles believed in immortality; but their name for the undying part of man was spirit, an entity unlike the soul. The body was one thing, the soul another, the spirit another. Hence Saint Paul said (1 Thess. v. 23): "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless;" (Heb. iv. 12) "The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." The body and soul could die, could be destroyed, but not the spirit. Spiritual beings existed without material bodies. The spiritual man, raised to a higher sphere, and clothed with a spiritual body, would live on forever. There is no record that any spirit ever died or was destroyed, or ever is to be destroyed. The body and soul may peacefully pass away in a ripe old age, or in youth or middle age be violently slain, or miserably perish in some loathsome Gehenna.

[1] "Calamity," — Job xxi. 30.

The lesson taught in the text at the head of this chapter is obvious. There is a right way to live, love, eat, drink, and act; and those who follow this right way are the righteous, and they are comparatively safe, prosperous, and happy. This is the will and law of God. Thus are they preserved. Those who do not live in this right way are the wicked; and they are always in imminent danger of disease, of accident, of violence, and of premature death; in other words, of being destroyed. The lesson is for us and for all. "Let us take due notice, and govern ourselves accordingly." He that would be preserved from all evil must "fear God and keep His commandments."

XI.

UNFORGIVEN.

"*Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*" — MATT. xii. 32.

IT is not our business to take care of God. To feast Him with praise, to gratify Him with prayers, to prevent Him from being grieved, to appease His anger, to render Him happy, to add to His glory, — is not our duty. He can and He does take care of Himself. Being infinite, He is ever perfectly serene, happy, and glorious. The conduct of man, good or bad, no more affects Him than the movements of animalculæ in a drop of water affect the scientist who looks at them through a microscope. Ancient wise men ascribed all phenomena, both the pleasant and the terrible, to God; and they were right; but the manifestations of grief, anger, wrath, and vengeance which they imagined came from Him, were merely the result of their imperfect sight and reason. He changes not. His laws and ways change not. They adapt themselves to all contingencies, — sometimes in gentleness, sometimes in awful power. In talking of sin and forgiveness, we

may therefore leave God, so far as any change in His feelings and actions are concerned, entirely out of consideration; and as the text does not contain His name, or refer to Him as an actor or factor in the matter of forgiveness, we shall not attempt to bring Him into the account.

Sin is a transgression of law; a stepping over, a going beyond, an act contrary to the eternal law of right. Those who transgress the law unwittingly, make a bad blunder; those who knowingly and wilfully disobey it, sin. It is said there is a vast amount of sin committed every day; and this is without doubt true; but we should not indulge in morbid anxiety about our unknown sins. So far as we can judge, there are many people, and among them some who are not accounted pious, that commit very little sin, — that pass days, and sometimes weeks, without a stain of iniquity. They mean to be, and are, honest, kind, useful members of society; and they have no reason to be anxious about their own forgiveness or punishment. But sin is committed by most people; and the act is invariably followed by a result called punishment. It is as if a loaded wagon were at once hitched to the sinner, which he is compelled to draw with him wherever he goes. It is a load of shame, fear, regret, remorse, and other evils; and every fresh sin adds to its magnitude and weight. Great sinners are obliged to take with them everywhere an enormous burden of painful results.

Forgiveness by some is supposed to be unharnessing the sinner or cutting the traces, that he may be freed from his burden; but this is not a correct idea. The traces are harder than steel, and nothing short of a miracle can unfasten the harness. For example, a person may sin by wasting his time in idleness and folly; and the precious days and opportunities thus gone, not even God can bring them back. They are lost beyond recall; and the memory of their loss must ever be an unpleasant weight on the mind. An early acquaintance of ours became intemperate, and in a drunken frolic broke one of his legs. His blood being poisoned by the fiery beverage he drank, gangrene set in, and the limb had to be amputated. This was the result of, the punishment for, his sinful habit; and no kind or amount of forgiveness could restore that lost leg. Another intemperate man in a drunken brawl lost an eye. This was a part of his punishment. He repented, reformed, became pious, and believed himself forgiven; but sight was not restored to his blind eye. Nor does forgiveness restore to health the man whose constitution has been broken down by his vices, nor cleanse the pages of memory that are blackened by the record of his evil deeds. In every instance the traces hold, and the sinner is obliged to drag the heavy load of bitter results on through life, death, and perhaps beyond.

We can forgive, but not forget. We suppose

Paul remembers to this hour that he cruelly persecuted the unoffending Christians. Is the remembrance pleasant to him? We suppose Cain can still remember how he murdered Abel; and when he thinks of it, does not the old guilty mark still come to his brow? Forgiveness does not change wrong into right. In the parable, the good father forgave his prodigal son; but this did not bring back the lost time and misspent money, did not neutralize the encouragement his son had given to other sinners, or prove that he had been a good boy. The whole thing was still bad and black. When a man speaks against the Holy Ghost, the speech and the feeling that prompted it go into the book of the Recording Angel, to be condemned as bad, forever.

What then is forgiveness? Our answer is, — it is reconciliation; it is willingness to drag the load; it is the injured and the injurer meeting in friendship; it is the natural and inevitable result of repentance and reformation. The process is simple: the offender ceases to offend; and the offended party, if human, begins to suspect that he himself may have been too exacting and perhaps mistaken. The feelings of each begin to soften. Gradually the parties approach and wipe out the old score; and finally a reconciliation alike honorable and pleasant to both takes place. And there is joy in heaven among the angels. If a person sins against his own

soul or better judgment, the path to forgiveness is the same; and when our hearts condemn us not, then we are at peace with God. In this way all kinds of sin and blasphemy, save one, may be forgiven. What is that one? Is it a sin that you or I may have committed? Is it that blasphemous oath, that harsh speech, that deception, fraud, or crime, of which we may have been guilty? We hope not; for we do not want to grow old and die with either an unforgiven or an unforgiving spirit. What is the unpardonable sin?

There has been much speculation and many different opinions respecting this sin; and now and then a person imagines himself guilty of it and becomes insane. It may be difficult to decide exactly what Jesus meant, though his statement is very explicit. In Mark's Gospel it is intimated that the Saviour uttered these words because the Jews said he had an unclean spirit; and it is generally agreed by candid students of the Bible that the particular sin alluded to at the time was the blasphemous statement that the Son of God "cast out devils by [the aid of] Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Those who said this, knew better; knew it was a malicious calumny against the best man of the age. Hence the blackness of this sin. Those who were guilty of it were base and vile enough for any crime. But that bigoted age has passed away, and no one in our day says or imagines that Jesus was aided by the prince

of devils. Either then the unpardonable sin is no longer committed, or we must attach a broader meaning to the language of the Master. We prefer the latter alternative. Human nature has not changed; and the same feelings indulged by the ancient enemies of Jesus are possible now. Hence some, perhaps many, in our day may have the guilt, though they do not utter the wicked words, of the unpardonable sin. Further, the Holy Spirit was not, and is not, a visible person to speak against. Instead, it is a (or the) Divine spirit that communes with man's spirit, and makes known unto him what is true and right. It is, as an Apostle said, "the Spirit witnessing with our spirit." It comes to all, and teaches all to do right. Whenever, therefore, a person acts contrary to the teaching of that Spirit, — or, in other words, acts contrary to his own light and knowledge, — he sins against the Holy Ghost. In this view of the case, — and we believe it the true one, — nearly all sins are sins against the Holy Ghost, and are not to be forgiven. What then? Is the door of mercy shut forever? Is there no hope for the wicked? Are we to tell dying sinners that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that therefore they cannot be happy in this world or the world to come? For such persons, is repentance, prayer, faith, of no avail? By no means. There are good reasons for believing that there is a glorious future possible for all.

The frightful idea that any sinner can be beyond the reach of mercy is contrary to the spirit of the Bible and the Christian Church. Isaiah said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Clergymen of all denominations glory in saying, "Grace is free and infinite. Whosoever will, may drink the water of life freely." Christ gave himself, a ransom for all. The invitation is given, the promise made to all. All can repent, pray, and be blessed, however greatly they may have transgressed.

The writers of the New Testament sometimes appear to compare things by making positive opposite statements; for example, "Lay not up treasures on earth, but in heaven. . . . Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." This is generally understood to mean, Let temporal affairs not be neglected, but made subordinate to spiritual interests. Paul said, "I am not sent to baptize, but to preach the Gospel," meaning that in his ministry baptism was not so important as preaching. Perhaps Jesus only meant to affirm that the sin against the Holy Ghost was not so easily and readily forgiven as other sins; leaving a hope that at last it too might be pardoned. It is quite certain that the *usus loquendi* of that age and

people does permit this interpretation. The anti-Christian Jews are not yet forgiven.

It is not certain that the phrase "world to come" means the resurrection state. That is not coming to us; we are going to it. The Greek word *aion*, translated *world*, literally and generally means *age;* and it is so rendered in the margin of the Revised Version. Whether sin may or may not be forgiven in the future life, to our mind Jesus simply said, The sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, "neither in this age," — the Jewish, — "neither in the age to come," — the Christian. Neither the Law nor the Gospel makes provision for its forgiveness. There is no allusion to anything beyond this earth life. Possibly, "over the river," the stains of earth may all at last be washed away by the infinite grace.

Saint Mark reports Jesus as saying, He that sins against the Holy Ghost "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." The phrase "in danger of" does not imply certainty, but uncertainty. He may escape. If one escapes, all may. There is certainly some reason to hope. Besides, the best scholars now generally agree in the opinion that *aionios*, the Greek word here rendered *eternal*, does not necessarily mean endless duration. It may here indicate a long time, — time indefinite. And this rendering is in accordance with both facts and philosophy. He who sins against his highest convictions of right, sins against his own light and

knowledge, is a hardened sinner, and is in danger of going on in sin, of growing worse, and remaining in condemnation. The Jews who crucified Jesus did remain in sin until they were miserably destroyed in the awful downfall of their nation.

No sinner's prospect is cheerful. Do what he may, he must still drag on his wagon-load of misery, because it is the result of his evil doing; and God will not, cannot, unharness him, or cut the traces that unite cause and effect. One hope remains, — the unforgiven sinner, by Divine assistance, may "cease to do evil and learn to do good;" and the happiness resulting from his good deeds may more than counterbalance the unhappiness caused by the memory of past misdeeds; and in the strength of a virtuous life the yoke may become so easy, and the burden so light, as not to be noticed. In the sunny influences of eternal heaven, the sins and sorrows of earth may dwindle to a point, and cease to annoy. When we call to mind the sad facts that many people are badly born and bred, that ignorance and temptation abound, and that the longest earthly life is comparatively short, we are inclined to pity rather than to condemn the sinful; and the sweet hope will come, that some time in the long hereafter a Divine voice will say to all who have been wicked: "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, sin no more, love much, and be forever happy."

XII.

THE FEARFUL HANDS OF GOD.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." — HEB. x. 31.

THIS is a dark saying, and hard to be understood. While reading it, one can hardly refrain from wishing either that the statement was more definite or that he was endowed with more wisdom. Let us first try not to misunderstand its meaning. Why is it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God? Is it far to fall? Are His hands so hard as to bruise, so hot as to burn, or so cold as to freeze, those who fall into them? Is it better, safer, more pleasant, less dangerous, to be out of His hands than in them? How happen some to be out of His hands, and some in them? In which place are we? What causes any one to have this fearful fall? These and similar questions curiosity will ask, and reason should try honestly to answer.

It would not be difficult for an unscrupulous man of talents to elaborate from this text an alarming and effective discourse. He might urge with much apparent plausibility, and prove by fragments of Scripture, that it is a fearful thing for the wicked

to fall into the hands of God: (1) Because He "is angry with the wicked;" and it is not pleasant or safe to be in the hands of any angry person, human or superhuman. Anger is a kind of mania; and a maniac is always dangerous. (2) Because God's anger, it is said, sometimes intensifies into hot, fierce, terrible wrath against evil-doers; and at such times it would be fearfully dangerous to fall into His hands. (3) Because He has threatened to punish with great severity all who persist in committing sin; and He always keeps His word, in the letter and the spirit; (4) Because He has prepared a great, dark, bottomless pit, in which there is a frightful lake of sulphurous fire, into which He will cast the finally impenitent, and there cause them to be tormented, day and night, forever and ever. (5) Because He is almighty, and therefore can do all this with ease; and much more in the same awful line.

Taking the words and phrases of the Bible in their literal sense, it is easy to preach in this way, and thus terrify the ignorant and the sinful. Many sermons of this kind have been delivered, and indirectly have possibly done some good; but they are not in harmony with reason or the spirit of revelation, and their general effect cannot therefore be good. The Bible is an Oriental book, and full of Oriental imagery; and we must spiritualize the figurative language, or fail to get its meaning. For example, the phrase "in the hands of God" is not equiva-

lent to an assertion that He has hands like ours; instead, it simply means under the control of God and at His disposal. All men, good and bad, are in this condition, and therefore in His hands. He is omnipresent, all-wise, and almighty; and hence no one can get away from Him, or outwit Him, or overmaster Him. Between us and Him there is absolutely no barrier, no distance. He is above all, through all, and in all. In Him we live, move, and are. Each human being can truly say with the Psalmist: "If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [Sheol], Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand hold me." He is the omnipresent and absolute Ruler of the universe; and all beings and things are under His control and at His disposal. Hence all talk about falling into His hands, either as a lapse through space or a change in potential relation, in a literal sense is grossly absurd.

But were it possible in any way literally to be out of God's hands, — that is, outside of Him and His influence, — remaining out would be fearful, and getting in exceedingly desirable. In His hands is perfect security. So long as a person is there, no foe can harm him, no evil befall him, without the Divine permission; and as the Almighty is perfectly kind, even to those who have done wrong, the best

things possible will be meted out to all who are in His paternal keeping. This is so manifest and so generally believed, that the timid, the unfortunate, and those in peril instinctively look and pray to Him for deliverance and protection. Even the most depraved, when, like the prodigal son in the parable, they come to themselves and regain the use of right reason, say: "Why do I stay here and starve, while in my Father's house there is bread enough and to spare? I will arise and go home; for there I shall find shelter and protection, and possibly forgiveness and affection." Millions of sinners have thus sought God, though He was all the time with them. In this view of the case, it is not fearful but blessed to get into the conscious presence and keeping of the living God. It is written, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;" and he has good reason to feel that it is a fearful thing to be in the cold, hard hands of blind chance and pitiless law. But if he had sense enough to be made to realize that there is a living God whose nature is love, his first wish would be, to be in and remain in His kind care and keeping.

Some people may think it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God to be punished, because He can punish so long and so severely; but this was not the opinion of King David, the sweet singer of Israel. When he had sinned in taking the census of his nation, and was to be punished by a national

calamity, and the choice was given him, either to fall into the hands of hostile men and suffer repeated defeat in battle, or to fall into the hands of Nature and shrivel in the deadly presence of famine as a result of scanty harvests, or to fall into the hands of God and have the land smitten with the pestilence that cuts down small and great, he at once said, "Let me fall into the hands of God." His choice was wise. God is ever calm, just, and merciful. He knows exactly how much punishment is deserved and needed, and He never inflicts more or less; hence it is safest to fall into His hands for correction. Moreover, at the time of its infliction, His chastisement may seem very grievous and hard to endure; "nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Thus far we have not attempted to show what is meant by its being "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" and we are not positive that we know precisely what the writer did mean by this strange statement. There are, however, two considerations that seem to throw some light on this dark subject: —

1. By a law that governs human nature, everything that a person looks at is tinged with the hue of his own mind, character, and feelings; just as a colored lens makes everything seen through it appear colored. To the pure all things seem pure; while

to the defiled and disobedient nothing seems pure. To the unhealthy, all nature seems wan and sickly; to the timid, danger seems lurking on every side; to the contentious, foes seem numerous; to the innocent and loving, the whole world is a paradise. In accord with the working of this law, it is said (Ps. xviii. 25, 26, Noyes's translation): "To the merciful Thou showest Thyself merciful; to the upright Thou showest Thyself upright; to the pure Thou showest Thyself pure; and to the perverse Thou showest Thyself perverse." And there can be no doubt that to the sinful God showeth Himself, or seems distant, unloving, angry, and ready to punish severely; and this mental illusion is a part of their punishment. The wicked feel that they are absent from God, and that so long as He and they are separate they are comparatively safe. To their darkened minds, going to Him would be going to be chastised severely; and that is a fearful thing to do and to suffer. It is natural and right for the guilty to have these fears and feelings; and it was proper for the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews to remind them of this sad condition of all transgressors. The statement might lead some men to be more circumspect, and others to repentance. In this light, the text is "founded on fact," and is worthy of an apostle's pen.

2. The second consideration is suggested by the context, which reads: "He that despised Moses'

law died without mercy," by being burned or stoned to death. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, I will recompense, saith the Lord. . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The evident meaning is: God can and does punish the guilty more severely than man can. Man can burn, stone, behead, a criminal; God can inflict sorer punishment. But what is more fearful than a violent death? Torment by fire in hell might be worse; but is there nothing else? We answer: The sting, the mental agony, that sin gives to the dying hour is much more fearful than death. A consciousness of guilt brings a misery to which the material body is a stranger. The natural death of the aged, and all whose bodies are wasted by disease or mangled by accident, is not a punishment, but a relief, a blessing. To a sinful soul, the sting of a guilty conscience, the burden of regret and remorse, and the dread of the future are fearful penalties; and these God inflicts on the wicked, even in the solemn hour of their dissolution.

There are two things more fearful than falling into the hands of God: one is, to be in the cruel, enslaving hands of sin; and the other is, to be in the cold,

clammy hands of ignorance. The virtuous and well-informed can face death with calm composure. Only to the sinful, ignorant, and unbelieving is death the king of terrors, or God an apparent enemy. God is good; let us not fear His tender hands. His rod of correction is a healing wand; may it touch us when we err, and reach all the guilty! And let us not forget the fundamental truth of revelation, that we and all souls are and ever shall be in the hands, in the kind, safe keeping, of the Infinite Love.

XIII.

NOT BORN AGAIN.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdc God." — JOHN iii. 3.

THIS is a plain statement of an important The kingdom of God must be the realm, an(only realm, of divine purity, love, and blessedn and no one can enter or even see this heavenly k dom unless he has been born again. All ot must remain outside and afar off. This seems t one of the greatest deprivations and misfort imaginable. In view of these momentous facts, questions, Have we been born again? If not, how we be born again? and is it probable that we shall be? arise and assume a thrilling interest. answers to these questions, where so much is at st ought to be obvious to even the dullest compre sion; but while looking for them we meet n doubts and difficulties.

Nicodemus, the gentleman to whom Jesus speaking when he uttered these words, was, wit doubt, a learned, honest, candid, devout rabbi. firmly believed in God, and worshipped Him in

way prescribed in the ritual of Moses. He recognized in Christ "a teacher come from God," and believed in him as far as he knew him. But he desired to know more; and hence, in the hush of the evening, after most people had retired to rest, he went to Jesus to have a quiet, serious talk. He was a very excellent man; yet Jesus told him, at the outset, that he, even he, must be born again or he could not see the kingdom of God. If so good and pious a man needed a new birth, then no amount of virtue or grace in us is any indication that we have been born again. Believe and hope as we may, a grave doubt whether we have had the great change of regeneration and rebirth must ever shadow the minds of even the best of us.

Birth is a sudden and radical change in the condition, feelings, opportunities, and activities of the creature born. It is a rapid transition from a state of comparative quiet, unconscious indifference, to a state or condition exactly opposite, — to freedom, activity, want, and new feelings. But since arriving at the age of mature reflection, no one of us is conscious of having passed through such a new-birth change. By the slow processes of growth and culture our powers have increased, our opinions changed, our views broadened, our feelings been modified; yet in every essential respect we have remained the same. Our appetites, passions, conscience, heart, traits of character, peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, have not altered.

We trust that with advancing years and the incoming of more light we have slowly grown wiser and better; but we must candidly confess that so far as we can remember, we have never experienced any change that in any way resembled a new birth. We cannot recall the time when we did not respect right and despise wrong, love happiness and loathe misery, feel at times weak and desire assistance, realize that we had in some instances done wrong and long to be forgiven. Each of us has swept the entire scale of feeling from blue depression to jubilant joy; but we have no proof that we have been born again. What ought we to do?

We suppose all Christians are agreed in the opinion that the phrases "born again" and "born of God" have one and the same meaning. He that is born again is born of God; and he that is born of God is born again. It is written (1 John v. 18): "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not." We know that we do occasionally sin; hence we are compelled to believe that we have not been born of God, — have not been born again; and we see no way to avoid this humiliating conclusion. And it is an aggravating bitterness in our cup of humiliation that we cannot help ourselves in this matter, and that we may never be born again. Birth is a change in which the creature born is entirely passive. The unborn move only when and as they are moved upon. They are "brought forth." This fact is recognized in the

passive predicate "be born again." There is no active voice of the verb *born*. We cannot born ourselves. We may long and pray for the new birth, but we can do nothing about it. When, if ever, the time is ripe and God wills, parturition will take place, and we shall enter the new stage of existence and see the kingdom of God. Till then, all we can do is to wait and hope. We have now made a frank and full confession of our condition in regard to a new birth, — we have not been born again; and it seems to us that even evangelical Christians must admit that we have written "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." But this truth has a wide application. All men, whether evangelical or unevangelical, are in the same embryonic condition, — not born again. The evidence is conclusive. Very few persons of culture, capable of comprehending mental phenomena, can call to mind any change in themselves worthy the name of "born again;" and the testimony of the ignorant is of little value. But more than this, it is an old and true statement that "no man liveth and sinneth not." Judging them by their fruits and by their own public confessions, nearly all professed Christians and church-members are still sinners, and hence have not been born of God, — not been born again; and although the glorious privilege of seeing and entering the Divine kingdom is contingent, they can do nothing to bring about their new birth and secure the blessing.

The truth is, we are all in the same boat, and have no power to steer it through the birth-strait.

In this condition of affairs, it seems the duty of all Christians to seek some explanation of the words of Jesus that will free us from these difficulties and open the door of hope, and at the same time be in harmony with the Scriptures and the right use of reason; and it seems to us that this is not a hard task. The light breaks on our mind in this way: there are two meanings to the phrase "born again," — a lower and a higher meaning.

First, the lower or common meaning, in the age of Jesus and the Apostles. The Jews at that time were animated by a missionary spirit. They desired to convert the Gentiles to the Mosaic religion. In Scripture language, they "compassed land and sea to make proselytes." When, as occasionally happened, a Gentile was converted to Judaism, he was baptized, symbolically to wash off his stains of sin and error; and was then said, in Oriental style, to be born again, — that is, born into the Mosaic religion and church. In that age the expression was in common use, and well understood by everybody. Nicodemus had probably uttered the words hundreds of times. What puzzled him was that Jesus should say that he, a born and bred Jew, a devout believer in the law and its ordinances, needed to be born again. He was already in the theocratic kingdom, and was expecting that its rightful king,

the promised Messiah, would soon come and ascend its throne. How could a man like him, full grown in the true faith, have a new birth? He needed, and we need, a different and higher definition of the phrase than mere conversion. A glance at the opinions and feelings of the Jews at that time will disclose this higher meaning.

Misled by the figurative language of the Old Testament, they believed that a man of divine nature and ability was about to come, assume the office of king, rouse the nation to arms, lead them to battle, drive out the detested Romans, and establish a kingdom that would rule and bless all mankind and make Jerusalem the capital of the world. Nicodemus without doubt had this cheering belief: and having heard much of the miracles and wonderful discourses of Jesus, he may have thought him to be the Christ. To satisfy himself, he sought and obtained a private interview. In answer to his first questioning remark, Jesus said, "Except a man [yourself, for example] be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The rabbi mused. "Why not? Have I not eyes? Could I not see Israel's glorious king in command of our army, the victorious battles, the Roman cohorts driven from Palestine, and the kingdom of David and Solomon re-established in more than its ancient grandeur? I, a rabbi and a ruler in Israel?" Yes, if such a phenomenon should occur; but nothing of the kind was

to take place. Jesus explained: "By 'born again' I mean 'born of the spirit, born from above, born of God, entering into spiritual life.' The Christ is to be a spiritual king; the kingdom of God, a spiritual kingdom; and hence it can be seen only by the eyes of a spiritual being. You, even you, Nicodemus, must become more spiritually minded, or not perceive the great religious régime about to be inaugurated."

This, without a shadow of doubt in our mind, was the exact meaning of the Saviour; and this meaning is in harmony with the drift of the New Testament. John the Baptist said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." On one occasion Jesus said to those around him, "The kingdom of God is within you," in your midst, even now. Saint Paul said, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink [is not an earthly realm], but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Saint John says (1 John v. 1): "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and of course sees the Divine kingdom. Nicodemus did not believe this, and hence he had not been born again. The kingdom of God, we believe, is the Christian dispensation, — the régime of grace on earth, which, though small at the outset, is destined to increase and spread until it leavens the entire human race, and all souls, from the greatest to the least, know and love God.

Admitting this natural and Scriptural interpretation of what Jesus said, it is evident that he did not

allude to the after-death condition of souls, nor to a change needful to prepare the rabbi to enter heaven in the next stage of existence. Instead, he spoke of affairs pertaining to earth only; and he uttered a truth as important and pertinent here and now as there and then, — no selfish, sinful, unspiritual, animal man can enter, see, or appreciate God's pure, blessed Gospel kingdom, on earth or anywhere else, until he is born of the Spirit and has opened his spiritual eyes. Hence arises the great need of preaching and teaching, of Christian culture, to open men's soul-eyes, and thus "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," that they may have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Although the text under review was not spoken to inculcate, yet it forcibly suggests, a still higher and grander thought. "Born again" implies a first and a second birth. By our first birth we entered into this world; by our second birth, through death and the resurrection, we shall enter another world; and the details of the two births are very much alike. In each case the person exists before he is born. In every human being there is an immortal embryo. The unborn possess all the organs and faculties required in the next stage of existence. Even now around our souls are folded the wings of an angel, and in our hearts seraphic love is enshrined. Birth is entrance into a higher sphere;

and by the second birth man enters into the highest sphere we can imagine. It is not a change of identity or personality, but entrance into a realm where many and great changes are imminent and certain. Especially will our second birth introduce us into a realm of enlarged freedom and opportunity for growth in grace and knowledge. We shall be freed from the animal body, — the instigator and instrument of sin; freed from the needs and pains of our mortal forms; freed from the cares and anxieties incident to our earthly life; free to go where we please, and to labor without being weary, to enjoy without being satiated; free to commune with angels and glorified spirits; and, with keener perceptions and clearer intellect, free to learn, to improve, and to go on to perfection. The fulness of all this will not come at the instant of our second birth, for we shall then be merely immortal babes; but it will come gradually, as the result of growth and evolution, in the realm where there is neither marrying nor sexual complications, no tears or fears, no death or pain, but light, love, beauty, and harmony forever.

In this sublime view of the subject, no person is really born again until the soul leaves the material body. But by faith in God, in Christ, in immortality, we may even here enter into a realizing consciousness of our future destiny, and heaven begin below. God and heaven are as near us now as they ever will be; but until the great day of revelation

consequent on our actual new birth, we are obliged to "walk by faith and not by sight." Yet we can improve our spiritual condition. "Faith comes by hearing" or reading the Word of God, by deep meditation, and in answer to the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith." In due time we shall all be born again, and see and enter the kingdom of God.

XIV.

RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION.

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." — JOHN v. 28, 29.

THESE words are by many supposed very clearly to set forth the prevalent evangelical idea of the final destiny of the human race. Christ is to come again as a person, and summon the dead to judgment; a general resurrection of both the just and the unjust will ensue; a separation of the vast throng into two dissimilar portions will take place, — one portion, "they that have done good," will enter the higher life, and the other portion, "they that have done evil," will receive damnation, — and the drama of earth and man will end. These solemn, startling statements, it is said, came from the lips of Jesus, the teacher sent from Heaven to give us instruction: and it becomes us to hear, believe, shudder, and try to do good enough to secure eternal life. The language is apparently definite and explicit; but in a matter of such tremendous importance, we want to be sure, if possible, of the exact meaning of every

word. Is the general view of the passage, as above stated, correct? Is the translation perfect? Does the context throw any light on the subject? What is the exact meaning, in this statement, of the words *hour*, *voice*, *dead*, *graves*, *resurrection*, *life*, and *damnation?* Is the passage to be regarded as a literal account of actual events that are to transpire? Let us make a candid and thorough investigation.

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." The earth is twenty-five thousand miles in circumference, and there are graves in every land. Wherever Christ is to stand on that great occasion, there will be graves all the way from a mile to twelve thousand five hundred miles distant; and a voice that could reach all of them would have to be a thousand times more powerful than the loudest thunder. Is the gentle Jesus to utter a shout so enormously loud? Could even a blast from Gabriel's trumpet reach so far? At twelve thousand miles' distance, could any vocal air-wave be perceptible even to the living? It seems impossible. Besides, sound moves only about eleven hundred feet in a second; and it would require several hours for a voice uttered in Palestine to reach the graves in California and Australia. All in the graves will not hear the voice in the same hour, unless Christ rapidly visits every part of the earth in sixty minutes, constantly shouting as he goes, — a supposition that seems very absurd. From these

considerations we are compelled to believe that neither the *voice* nor the *hour* is to be understood literally. The hour must be time indefinite; and the voice only a summons.

"All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth." This cannot be taken literally. A very large number of the bodies of the dead have not been buried in graves; many have been burned, many engulfed in the sea, many left to rot above ground, and many devoured by wild beasts and cannibals. If only those who have been buried or entombed are to hear his voice, a very great multitude of the dead will not hear it. But if the bodies of all who have died during the past six thousand years had been buried, very few of them would now be in the graves. Unless the dead are embalmed as soon as life leaves the body, chemical decomposition begins; and it does not stop until the "dust returns to the dust as it was," and the body, as an organized form, ceases to exist. If, therefore, only those bodies that are in the graves come forth, the number will be comparatively small. But all the dead are evidently intended; and hence we are obliged to suppose that the word *graves* is used figuratively for the dead. If so, then the old, ghastly notion that grassy graves are to burst open, and bodies long dead are to come up out of them, must be abandoned. In fact, no item of the drama so long held by many as a reality finds any support in this

passage of Scripture. The idea of the second coming of Christ in a human form, of the mighty voice, the graves, the dead bodies, the separation into two classes, utterly vanishes. We must find a figurative meaning, or the passage remains a mystery.

In addition to these erroneous ideas about the passage, one word in it is made misleading by being wrongly translated. It is the ominous word *damnation.* In Worcester's Quarto Dictionary *damnation* is defined to be "a sentence to the eternal torments of hell;" and this is, without doubt, its popular and actual meaning. This is an alarming fact. If Jesus uttered a word of such awful import, we and all sinners have reason to fear and tremble. But did he? We hasten to get the opinion of the wise and learned. In Noyes's very excellent translation of the New Testament, the phrase reads "resurrection of condemnation." In the risen state those who have done evil may feel or receive condemnation. That is infinitely better than damnation. It is but a natural and just retribution. How long the state of condemnation will continue is not mentioned. But Dr. Noyes, though a ripe scholar and an honest man, was a Unitarian, and his belief may have biased his judgment. We go therefore to the Revised Version of the New Testament. This was made by learned evangelical divines; and it ought to be reliable. To our surprise and gratification we find the phrase reads "resurrection of judgment;" and *judgment*

does not mean "a sentence to eternal torments in hell." On further investigation, we find that there is other good orthodox testimony to the fact that there is no word in the Greek New Testament that means "damnation." The profane may continue to repeat the awful word, and the timid and ignorant to be afraid of a doom so frightful; but it is a great relief to us to learn that Jesus never uttered, and the inspired penmen never wrote, a word having this meaning. A danger that neither Christ nor his Apostles mentioned need not give us alarm.

Having thus disposed of erroneous interpretations and crude notions, we come now to something more important and practical: What did Jesus in this statement mean to teach his hearers and us? We reply: —

1. He meant to reaffirm and emphasize the old doctrine that it shall be well with the righteous, "they that have done good," and ill with the wicked, "they that have done evil." This is a law, a destiny, that every person ought to understand. Not belief, or profession, or religious rite, insures the blessing, but the actual doing of good; and neglecting to do good, doing evil, brings the curse. The "good" alluded to is fully set forth in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. It is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the stranger, visiting the sick and afflicted, — in a word, philanthropy. In earth and heaven — by men, angels, and God — these

good works are approved, and the doer blessed with true divine life.

2. This is the law, the rule, the result, not for some Jews or some Christians, but for all, even "all that are in the graves," — that is, the dead. All, both the living and the dead, shall hear his voice and come forth. But in the Bible "the dead" does not always mean "corpses." Bad men are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins." Saint John said of himself and some other Christians, "We know we have passed from death unto life," — not from dead bodies to living men, but from unbelief and sin to belief and love. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "You who were dead hath he quickened," — that is, raised from sluggish indifference to the animating hope, love, and joy of the Gospel. But if the word *graves* has an ominous sound, read Ezek. xxxvii. 11–14: "Prophesy unto them [the degraded and oppressed Jews in captivity], Thus saith the Lord, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord." All commentators, so far as we know, concur in the opinion that this is figurative language. These people were not literally dead and buried, but ignorant, sinful Hebrew captives in Babylonia. And the dead of whom Jesus spoke, possibly, probably, were not coffined dead bodies, but persons in the chill shadow of a moral death.

Even such were to hear the voice of the Son of God in the Gospel, and come forth to a new life.

3. "The resurrection." As the body of a dead man "returns to the dust as it was," and its reorganization and reanimation is neither expected nor desired by any candid thinker, the resurrection must be a change of some other kind. If the spirit were dead, its return to life might be called a resurrection; but man's spirit is immortal, and immortal spirits cannot die. *Anastasis*, the Greek word for resurrection, does not necessarily mean "revitalizing;" but it does mean "standing up, rising up from a sitting or recumbent posture." It is a result of the volition of the living. A resurrection then is a mental change, a rising up of the soul from the torpor of evil to a consciousness of moral responsibility and of an overruling Providence and an eternal destiny. It is being quickened, being born again, passing from animal lethargy to spiritual life. This great change may take place before the death of the body; but if not, it must occur at some time. We have the most positive assurance that all shall hear his voice; that there is to be a resurrection "both of the just and the unjust," and that, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

4. "The voice of the Son of God." No intelligent person now believes that the dead are to be awakened into life by a mere noise emanating from either a mouth or a trumpet. Christ's voice must therefore

be, not wavelets of sound, but the sense and spirit of what he said or is to say, — in other words, the Gospel that he preached. "The Gospel is the power of God to salvation," — a power adequate to change the living and raise the dead. Christ was then preaching the Gospel to the Jews; and the Apostles were commanded to go into all the world, and preach it to every creature. It is also said that the Saviour went and "preached to the spirits in prison," whoever or wherever they were. Eventually, therefore, all mankind, the living and the dead, are to hear the voice of Christ in the stirring truths of the Gospel, and be aroused to a new life.

5. "The hour [in Greek, *ora*] is coming, in the which." *Hour* does not always signify a period of just sixty minutes; but time, a space of time, a season, time indefinite. Measured by the great clock of eternity, whose pendulum is an apparently fixed star, and on whose dial, in God's sight, "a thousand years are as one day," an hour may be a very long period of time. There is no proof that by *hour* Jesus meant a very short space of time. On the contrary, it is manifest to us that he referred to a then future age of indefinite duration. In effect he said: "A new age, a Christian dispensation, is coming, in the long duration of which all, the living and the dead, shall hear the voice of the Son of God in the thrilling strains of the Gospel, the glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." This

true view of the passage is sustained by the context (John v. 25): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." The resurrection age had already begun. The Divine voice was first heard by dead Jews; ultimately it will be heard by all the dead, both Jew and Gentile.

6. "The resurrection," and its sequences. When a good man, unacquainted with the Gospel, learns and believes that he is the immortal son of the Infinite Love, in whose kind care and keeping he is, and is to be forever, he enters a new state of existence, and partakes of eternal life; in Scripture phrase, he "passes from death to life," and is a new creature, is alive in Christ. He feels at peace in God, and is animated by love and a joyful hope. And these rich blessings are not gifts or payments, but the natural and inevitable results of his Christian faith. This interpretation is sanctioned by the explicit words of Jesus (John v. 24): "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life." When a bad person hears and believes the Gospel, he at once realizes that he has been injuring himself and others; that he has not been enjoying the good within his reach, but adding to the misery and degradation always existing in depraved society; and that without holiness

he cannot possess true love, hope, manliness, or happiness; and he thus awakes, "comes forth," into a new life, — a condition of shame, condemnation, self-contempt. These evils are not punishments inflicted from without, but the natural and inevitable results of wrong-doing. In fact, they are blessings in disguise. Self-condemnation is the first step in genuine repentance, and the first intimation of a capacity for improvement. A totally depraved person could feel no shame and condemn himself for no guilt. Condemnation can be felt only by those who have done wrong, yet approve of right. And so long as shame, regret, and condemnation continue, the soul cannot be perfectly happy.

At this point the passage under consideration closes its testimony. How long this pitiable condition of the awakened sinner will last, and how, if at all, he is delivered from it, are not shown in the text or context. But we are not left to conjecture. Sinners are sometimes saved, and the Gospel relates the process. First, the sinner's spiritual eyes are opened, and he perceives the beauty of holiness and the haggard hatefulness of sin. Then comes the sense, the feeling, of shame and condemnation. Then come a desire and a determination to lead a better life. Then comes a wish, a prayer, for Divine assistance. Lastly, comes a consciousness of forgiveness. New ideas float into his mind; the burden of the past rolls off and slides away; and a higher,

happier frame of the soul ensues. Something seems to say, and perhaps it is the voice of the Son of God: "Well, let the past go; it cannot be changed. Your Father in heaven still loves you. Hope; hope on, hope ever! Eternity is before you; and in all its countless years you may be holy and happy. Christ came to save such as you; you are forgiven. Look up, look ahead, and rejoice." Thus may those who come forth to a resurrection of condemnation be saved.

XV.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." — 2 COR. v. 10.

WE suppose the word *all* in this passage means every human being, — all who lived before the birth of Jesus, all who have lived since, and all who are yet to be born. Each one of us is included in the number, and hence each one of us has a personal interest in the affair; and each one of us ought to know what the Bible teaches respecting the great and general judgment. A judgment seat is a seat, bench, or throne for a judge to occupy. It implies a court room or area large enough to accommodate the judge and the persons on trial. Christ has or is to have such a seat and such a court room; and to it all of us have been or shall be summoned for trial and award according to our deeds. We are amenable to law, and accountable for our conduct. All this is clearly taught in the Scriptures and believed by all Christians.

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" but where that judgment seat is or is to be, when we are to "appear" there, whether all at once or in divisions or separately, how long the trial will

last, are questions on which there is not a general agreement among religious people. Many Christians have held the idea that the judgment would occupy but an hour, and that hour be at the second coming of Christ. Then, suddenly, the Judge will descend from heaven, the dead be raised and assembled before him, the judgment transpire, and the world — or at least its present sinful condition — terminate. Others are of the opinion that no dramatic scene of the kind is ever to take place; that the second coming of Christ was a purely spiritual affair which occurred soon after his ascension; that his seat is in every man's conscience; that the judgment has been going on, everywhere, all the time, ever since; and that it will go on until the end of time. There are good reasons for believing the first-mentioned idea wrong, and the second right.

1. A scenic display seems incompatible with the dignity and glory of the world's Redeemer. Eastern monarchs did sit on elegant thrones, and trembling culprits were brought before them for condemnation; and the scene was well calculated to awe the weak and ignorant, and to aggrandize the ambitious and selfish king. But for Christ, who promised to be with his disciples "alway, even unto the end of the world," to come down from heaven to earth, and sit down anywhere, even on "a great white throne," and play the rôle of an Oriental tyrant, would not be in harmony with his gentle, saving spirit. The solemn

spectacle on Calvary was needful and beneficial. It sealed in blood the Saviour's mission in the flesh, and touched the world's heart with pity, love, admiration. The crucifixion of the man Jesus had to be at a certain time and place; but a spectacular judgment in some special place at the end of the world is not needful, and would do no good. It could not make the saved any happier, the lost any more miserable, or God and Christ any more glorious. No witnesses need be heard, because the Judge knows all things, even the secrets of all souls. No proximity is necessary, because the Judge can as easily and quickly communicate his decision to a person ten millions of miles distant as to one only ten feet away. In the Divine economy, what is not becoming, needful, or beneficial will not be. Thus, in the light of reason, the imagery of a general judgment dissolves and vanishes; and the judicial dispensation of Christ expands to all time, all lands, and all human beings.

2. The theory that the judgment is a future, far-off, simultaneous affair may be in accordance with, and essential to, the belief that the main awards for human conduct are in the immortal world; and it may also seem merciful to give the sinner a whole lifetime in any hour of which he may repent, believe, beg for mercy, be forgiven, and thus escape deserved retribution; but what is apparently gained in consistency and mercy is more than counterbalanced by a loss of moral power. If the sinner is convinced that

at any time, in old age or in his dying hour, he may by proper effort secure full pardon from God, and go to judgment with a clean breast, and thus escape being rewarded according to his works, the inevitable tendency of his conviction will be procrastination and continuance in wrong-doing. Many an eloquent sermon on the "danger and folly of procrastination" has been preached; but the many still prefer to run the risk a little longer, — to continue in sin until death stares them in the face. But the theory of a continuous, universal court of justice in which every person every day is judged and rewarded according to his deeds, has an immense moral influence. Convince a man that all sin results in misery, and that each sin he commits increases the amount of his misery; that all virtue results in happiness, and that each virtuous act he does increases the amount of his happiness; that the great Judge of all is constantly weighing his conduct and working out these results, and that there is no possibility of losing the happiness or escaping the misery; and unless he is totally depraved or wholly a fool, he will try with all his energy to "cease to do evil and learn to do good." We are aware that the fear of punishment and the hope of blessings are not the only or the strongest incentives to virtue (love is far stronger); but when they are absolutely certain and immediate, as under the government of God in Christ they must be, they exert a healthy moralizing power.

3. The main reason for believing that the general judgment is now going on, and that every person on earth is now being judged, is that this doctrine is clearly taught in the Bible. We see and know that by natural laws some awards are made, both for doing right and for doing wrong; that, other things being equal, the temperate are more healthy than the intemperate, the good man happier and more hopeful than the bad man; but outside of Revelation there is no assurance that every person is or is to be rewarded fully, according to his works. In fact, apparently the virtuous suffer, and the vicious are happy. It is therefore a relief to search the Scriptures, and find therein "more light."

Ps. lviii. 11: "Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth." This cannot mean that He sometimes judges some people, and at other times abstains from judging. Instead, it is an announcement of the important fact that the omnipresent God is at all times judging all the people on the earth. It is a general, universal, continuous judgment. Moreover, it is absolutely just and right, and is going on every moment from birth to death. No case is "put over" to a future session; and an appeal from God's judgment is not supposable. There is no need of another judgment at the end of the world; and what is not needed, will not be. Essentially practical, all Christians concur in this opinion. At the moment of death every man's case and account is settled

beyond any possibility of any change in the Divine verdict. To the wicked who hope to escape retribution, the certainty of immediate justice may be alarming; but in reality, all that God does is good and for the best good of all. Hence it is written (Ps. xix. 9, 10): "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." In other words, the best thing in the world and for the world is the superintendence and management of the all-wise and all-good Judge. One feature of the blessed results of Christ's judgeship is foretold by the prophet Micah (iv. 3, 4): "And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his own vine and fig tree; and none shall make them afraid." In other words, the result of the judging or administration of Christ will be the redemption of the human race on earth from strife and sin and the misery that attends them. In ancient Oriental monarchies the king was the supreme judge; and if he was kind and competent, his nation enjoyed prosperity and happiness. Christ, the king and judge of all the earth, is kind and competent, and under his reign

the Prophets foretold a time when the Holy Spirit would be poured on all flesh, and all, from the greatest to the least, would know the Lord.

In the Old Testament, God is spoken of as the judge of all; in the New Testament, Christ is the sole judge. The law and the policy are the same in both dispensations; but in the new régime the Son is the official agent of the Father. Jesus said (John v. 22): "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." He adds (John v. 27) that the Father "hath given him authority to execute judgment." Again (John ix. 39): "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world." And finally he said (John xii. 31), "Now is the judgment of this world." Putting all this together, and bearing in mind that the risen Lord said, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me," the conclusions seem to us irresistible, that there is a Divine judgment now going on in this world among living men; that Christ is the judge; that it began immediately after his resurrection; that every person of each successive generation must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive in body the things he hath done; and that another judgment of the same people for the same offences or virtues, at the end of time, is utterly needless and improbable.

Several years ago, Professor Alpheus Crosby of Dartmouth College published a small volume en-

titled "The Second Advent," in which he clearly shows, by a multitude of proof-texts, (1) that the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, and the end of the world (*aion*) are simultaneous events; and (2) that the second coming of Christ must have taken place before some of the Twelve had tasted death, and hence before the generation in which he lived had passed away. All the writers of the New Testament expected his immediate return to earth; and their expectations were realized, not perhaps in the manner of his coming, but in its date. In saying to the Revelator, "Behold, I come quickly," the Saviour uttered the exact truth. He did come the second time, immediately; and of course the three other contemporaneous events — the resurrection, the judgment, and the end of the world — transpired. But there is no historical record of these events in a material form. The old earth still rolls peacefully in its orbit, the bones of the patriarchs quietly repose in the cave of Machpelah, and no outward eye has ever seen Jesus coming in the clouds, or the great white throne of judgment. And for the best of reasons, no such physical changes ever occurred or ever will occur; no such outward events were predicted or were to be expected. They were all spiritual affairs. Christ did come again as a spirit; the dead in sin, the human race, was summoned to his spiritual tribunal. The Jewish world, age, dispen-

sation, ended; and the Christian age began. In no other way can the passages that speak of these events be interpreted as true. We must abandon the Bible, or abandon the old notion of a literal resurrection and judgment at some yet future date. We prefer to give up the notion and hold on to the Bible.

Being thus obliged to adopt a spiritual exegesis of the general judgment, let us examine with care some of the Scripture statements on the subject, and try to ascertain whether they do or do not warrant our theory. A study of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew will satisfy any logical mind that there is good reason to believe that they both refer, and only refer, to events synchronous with the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the Jewish dispensation, and the beginning of the Christian. If such an interpretation can be fairly made, we shall be glad to accept it and retain our faith in the Word of God. We can still believe that Jesus spoke the simple truth; that the great judgment described in Matt. xxv. 31–46, began eighteen hundred years ago, that it has not ended, and that it will not end until the reign of Christ shall terminate.

There may be no warrant for asserting that the judgment is restricted to persons in this earthly life. It is certain that Christ is the judge of all, both the living and the dead, whether in the body or out of the body. It is also certain that a large majority of mankind have died in their sins; and perhaps the

general judgment extends to them, and causes each one of their guilty souls to go to its own place and receive a just recompense of reward. The possibility of this we are not disposed to deny; but it is a noteworthy fact that in the two great passages of Scripture in which the future life is spoken of with most distinctness, no allusion is made to a judgment. In reply to a question of the Sadducees respecting the marital relationships of the future life, Jesus said (Luke xx. 35, 36): "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." This is a clear and precious statement of the immortal realm, but it has no hint of any judgment there. It may teach a conditional resurrection, but it completely excludes the idea of an after-resurrection judgment. Those who are the immortal sons of God, and equal to the angels, certainly do not need to be judged. If there is to be a general judgment of those raised from the dead, it is strange Jesus did not mention it to the infidel Sadducees. Equally silent is Saint Paul in his lucid and explicit exposition of the resurrection in 1 Cor. xv. He distinctly states that all are to be raised, each in his own order, in incorruption, power, glory, in a spiritual body, and are to be unlike each other as stars differ

in brilliancy; but he does not even remotely allude to any judgment in that exalted life. It may be that "he that is dead is freed from sin," and that the close of the earthly life is to each soul the end of judgment.

It is quite probable that so far as soul development is concerned, the consequences of the present life extend far into the future in peculiarity of condition, rank, order, and amount or intensity of love and joy. Yet the judicial awards for special deeds of vice or virtue may be made and received before or in death. Adopting the Revised Version, and omitting the italic word *done*, this doctrine seems to be clearly taught by Saint Paul in 2 Cor. v. 10: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things in [*or* through] the body, according to what he hath done, whether good or bad." The "things" must be the awards for good or bad deeds; and if they are received in or through the body, only one question remains: Was Saint Paul right or wrong? If he was right, there is to be no after-death judgment, rewards, or punishments; if he is wrong, not reliable, we are all afloat without helm or anchor. We dare not reject the teaching of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. We believe in him, and rejoice that he repeats in substance the testimony of Solomon (Prov. xi. 31): "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner."

XVI.

THE SECOND DEATH.

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." — REV. ii. 11.

FROM this we may infer that some will not overcome, and will therefore be hurt by that mysterious change, the second death. Hurt how, when, where? There are only four verses in the Bible that allude to the "second death" by name; and these are all in Saint John's book of the Revelation. This occult book few people pretend fully to understand. To us it is a sacred panorama; the pictures are distinct, but we cannot always perceive their meaning. Hence we approach the subject with diffidence.

There are four theories respecting the second death: —

1. It is not a death at all, but eternal life in ceaseless misery. A second implies a first. The first death is the end of the present life, but the second death is not the end of anything. Instead, it is the beginning of endless woe, in which the poor lost soul, in full possession of all its faculties, will live and suffer forever. This theory is in accord

with the belief of many Christians; but it is so at variance with the ordinary meaning of words and the use of language, and so manifestly absurd, as to be unworthy of consideration. We leave it without comment.

2. The second death is the death of the soul. The first death is the dissolution and extinction of the material body; the second death is the dissolution and annihilation of the spirit. If an immortal spirit can thus die, this theory is plausible. It is analogically sound; other passages of Scripture seem to give it support; and some evangelical Christians are said to believe it. But the doctrine of annihilation is not in harmony with philosophy, or the spirit of the Gospel. It has never had many advocates in the Church of Christ, and probably never will have. To be "hurt" does not mean to be "killed;" and to be "hurt of the second death" cannot mean to be "put out of existence." We abandon this theory.

3. The second death is apostasy. To sin is to die. "In the day thou eatest of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt die." The unregenerate sinner is dead. This is the first death. To be converted, to believe in the teaching of Christ, to turn "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God," is the first resurrection; and to return to sin and unbelief is to die again, — is the second death. We find no fault in this theory. It is ingenious; it is well poised; it is advocated by some able theologians;

but it is not clearly taught in the Bible, and we are therefore obliged to rule it out as unsound.

4. Both the first death and the second were national affairs. The Jewish people, proud of their ancestry, of the purity of their blood, and of their religion, had dwelt in Palestine for many centuries. They believed themselves to be a chosen and highly favored race; they loved their hill-country home; and they fondly hoped to remain there forever. But, B. C. 588, Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, with a mighty army, invaded and subjugated Palestine, captured Jerusalem, burned the sacred temple, and carried almost the entire people into captivity in a foreign land. The fields of Judæa were left uncultivated, the houses empty, the land desolate. The nation was dead as a nation could be; and Palestine was erased from the map of kingdoms. The calamity was worse than the dismemberment of Poland; it was the apparent end of the Hebrew nationality, language, religion, and name. It was a national death, the first death of the Jewish commonwealth. The nation was dead, but the people still lived; and after an exile of fifty-two years, by a decree of Cyrus, King of the Medo-Persian Empire, a small portion of the people returned to their fatherland, and began to reconstruct the fallen State. Slowly and with much difficulty the walls of the capital were repaired, the temple rebuilt, the land cultivated, and a new lease of political life obtained. In the course

of time the full tide of prosperity came in, the promised Messiah was born, and a long and lofty career seemed open to the Jews. This was the first resurrection.

In Saint John's day another, a greater, and a lasting calamity was about to befall the Jewish nation; and it soon after came. A Roman army in command of Titus Vespasian, after a long and distressing siege, captured and destroyed Jerusalem. The temple was burned, many thousands of the people perished, many thousands were exiled; and the national life became extinct. This was the second and apparently the final death of the Jewish nation. During all the eighteen centuries since the terrible event there has been no semblance of a Jewish government in Palestine or anywhere else; and in all these dreary ages the homeless and scattered Hebrews have everywhere been a despised and ill-treated people. This impending calamity, clearly foreseen and foretold by our Saviour, is frequently alluded to in the New Testament; and Saint John voiced the general feeling in giving it the appropriate name, the "second death." In our judgment, this theory is very plausible. It is self-consistent and analogical; it is in harmony with historical facts; and it can be applied to each of the four passages in which the phrase "second death" occurs.

1. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the

second death" (Rev. ii. 11). Three facts are here stated: (1) There was to be a second death; (2) It would hurt some people; (3) Others — they that overcame something — it would not hurt. The remark was made to the church in Smyrna, which at that time contained a large number of Christianized Jews. The unconverted followers of Moses and the Prophets were bitterly opposed to the religion of Jesus, and plied every art and used every means in their power to crush it out. The disciples of Christ were reasoned with, tempted, warned, persecuted. They were soldiers of the cross, and their daily life was a constant warfare. Some overcame all opposition, and held fast their faith and integrity; others yielded to the pressure, relapsed into Judaism, and shared the sad fate of the Jewish nation, — that is, were hurt of the second death. The faithful Christian, true to himself, his Master, and his God, though liable to persecution, was on the winning side, became cosmopolitan, felt sure of eternal life, and was not hurt by the great Jewish calamity, — the second national death. This interpretation seems natural, plain, reasonable, consistent, true.

2. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power" (Rev. xx. 6). The first resurrection, as has already been shown, was the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon, the re-establishment of the nation and the temple service, growth in virtue,

and the advent of Christ, whom great multitudes of the "common people heard gladly." Jesus said, "I am the resurrection;" and of course he was the first resurrection. Into him, into his spirit, out of idolatry and ignorance, a goodly portion of the chosen people had been rising ever since the decree of Cyrus. Those who are in Christ, in the spirit of Christ, have part in the first resurrection. They are blessed and holy; and on such, in Saint John's day and ever since, the second death — the dispersion, degradation, and misery of the Jews — hath no power. They escape because they do not bear the Jewish name, and their Father careth for them.

3. "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, *even* the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 14, Revised Version). This passage is more difficult than the two already explained, simply because it is a broader statement, clothed in more figurative language. It is an Oriental court scene; and the meaning is to be sought beneath the imagery. That meaning cannot be found with the precision and certainty of a mathematical solution; but to our mind, it is approximately the following: "And I saw a great white throne," — the symbol of royal and judicial authority, — "and Him that sat upon it," — Christ, the divine king and judge, — "before whose face the earth and the heaven" — temporal and ecclesiastical governments — "fled away; and there was found no place for them," — they became

of no consequence. "And I saw the dead, small and great," — all nations and peoples dead in sin, — "stand before God" to be judged. There was no resurrection; all were still dead. "And the books" — the records of conduct, and the volume of Mosaic and universal law — "were opened," — adopted as the basis of the judgment; "and another book was opened, which is the book of life," — the Gospel of Christ. "And the dead" — not those raised to immortal life — "were judged out of those things which were written in the books." Those who had no knowledge of the law recorded on parchment had the divine commands, the law written on their hearts, and therefore were amenable to the Judge of all. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them," — figures to indicate the universality of the judgment; "and they were judged every man according to his works," — some having been more sinful than others. "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, *even* the lake of fire. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," to be punished. Here we have a definition, a synonyme; the second death is the lake of fire. But where or what was the lake of fire? It was not hell, for hell was cast into it; yet it seems to have been a place. What place? When Moscow was burning, in the days of the First Napoleon, a spec-

tator said it resembled "a sea of fire;" and when Sodom was burning, it probably resembled a lake of fire, — a spectacle that no Jew ever forgot. So when Jerusalem was burning, at the close of the siege conducted by Titus, it appeared like a lake of fire. To this event, as it appeared in vision, Saint John alluded; but, like everything else in his strange book, the allusion is figurative. A great fire is a great calamity, involving suffering, death, destruction. Those whose names were not written in the book of life were to suffer keenly; death, and Hades the place of the dead, were to be destroyed. But it was not literal fire; it was the executive arm of God — who, it is said, "is a consuming fire" — stretched forth in retributive justice and mercy in the Christian dispensation, — justice in punishing the guilty, mercy in destroying evil. This truth is stated more fully in the fourth passage.

4. "But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. xxi. 8). Here we have the same lake of fire and the same second death mentioned in the third passage, but with two added particulars. First, the fire is fed or mingled with brimstone, which increases its horribleness. The stench of burning sulphur is very offensive and suffocating. The combined action of these two, as

agents of destruction, is a very ancient idea. In Gen. xix. 24, it is recorded, "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire;" and they were thus utterly destroyed. This was known to all the Jews; and "fire and brimstone" became a phrase that denoted overwhelming ruin, and it appears to be thus used by Saint John. The second added particular is the specification of guilt, —the fearful or cowardly, the abominable, sorcerers, murderers, etc. Not only Jews, but Gentiles also; not only those who disobey the laws of Moses, but all sinners — all kinds of sinners — are to have their part in the lake of fire which is the second death. The retribution under the judgeship of Christ, in the siege, capture, and conflagration of Jerusalem, continues, and extends to all mankind. It is the steady, ubiquitous working of Divine law, to which we and all are amenable. It is one of the solemn truths of the Christian religion, and it should be emphatically stated time and again in every pulpit: "All sinners shall have their part in the lake of fire."

At this point our attempt to explain the mystery of the second death might close, did not several corollaries come to mind, that throw light on this confessedly difficult subject.

1. God is the Creator of all things, and hence He must have scooped out the basin of the lake, prepared the fuel, and kindled the fire. We cannot imagine that He, the great and good Ruler of the

universe, would allow any other person to get up such a vast bale-fire. The lake of fire, with all its appurtenances, is therefore His institution; and being His, it must be a good, an excellent, lake of fire and brimstone. A better one could not have been made. If we never see it, if we fail to appreciate its good qualities, we are not at liberty to doubt its worth and worthiness. God doeth all things well.

2. We are unable to perceive any beauty, anything ornamental, in this fiery lake, and hence we conclude that He made it, as we build a house or prison, for a useful purpose; and, He being all-wise and kind, this useful purpose must be good and commendable. Dr. J. Edwards's idea that the saints in heaven will rejoice at the agony of lost sinners never impressed us pleasantly; but there is no doubt that if we could fully comprehend the good purpose of the lake of fire, we should be glad that it was made, and grateful that it is or is to be used.

3. As there is no history or prophecy of the fire being extinguished, in all probability it is still burning, and so long as needed its lurid flame will continue to rise.

4. The lake of fire was evidently made to put sinners in to be tormented, to cause them to suffer excruciating agony. This seems cruel; and if the only object is to cause intense pain, it is cruel, and utterly unworthy the God who is love. He who calls souls into existence is certainly able to destroy them; and

annihilation is far better than endless suffering that does no good.

5. But there may be — let us hope there is — another object. Fire purifies, consumes, melts away the dross, and sets free the pure gold. Possibly the lake of fire is to burn off and burn out sin; to make the sinner thoughtful and penitent; to turn his heart to the Saviour; to refine, purify, and save the guilty. If this is so, the object is truly noble; and we are glad the fire was kindled, and devoutly pray that all sinners may have their part in it and receive its benefit.

6. But literal fire cannot even scorch the real sinner, the soul. Material bodies can hardly be called sinners, yet they only can be burned. Other — finer — agencies reach the spirit. "Fear hath torment;" and so have shame, regret, and remorse; and these agencies have a tendency to humble, make penitent, reform, and refine the doer of evil. The literal fire, being utterly powerless and useless, may as well go out. Few well-informed Christians in this age believe in a literal lake of fire and brimstone.

7. The second death — that is, the lake of fire — is the mental misery into which the wicked are plunged. It is the sequence of iniquity; and it exists wherever and whenever a person transgresses the laws of God. It is certainly in this world; and it will certainly be, or it is, in the resurrection state, if any sin is there committed.

8. Why sin and its inevitable punishment were permitted, the wisest men have not yet fully decided. God's ways are inscrutable, but they are right and good. Jesus, though not sinful, was made perfect through suffering; and it may be that all suffering is a means of grace, and that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

XVII.

SPIRITS IN PRISON.

Christ "went and preached unto the spirits in prison." — 1 PET. iii. 19.

"The gospel was also preached to them that are dead." — 1 PET. iv. 6.

TO our mind, these sayings have ever seemed dark and hard to be understood; and we have long wished for light on this subject. The explanations given by the learned commentators have not been entirely satisfactory; and we were unable to frame a theory that would fully accord with reason and revelation. It was therefore with great pleasure that we recently found and read, in a high-toned magazine, an article on "Preaching to the Spirits in Prison." It was written by a ripe scholar and profound thinker, and was a labored attempt to show that the passages quoted above are historical statements of actual occurrences. There was, and perhaps is, a prison in which spirits were imprisoned. The dead, at least some of the dead, were also there. They needed to hear preaching, and Christ "went and preached to them." This was the interpretation; and so far as our limited knowledge of the dead languages enabled

us to judge, the arguments were philologically correct. This explanation also revealed a new lustre in the Saviour's glory: he came not only to seek and save the lost on earth, but also the spirits in prison. We may now pray and hope for the salvation of the dead, even for those who never heard of Christ or his gospel; for some of those in prison who listened to his preaching are undoubtedly saved. But on mature reflection, many puzzling questions arise.

Where was the prison to which the Saviour went? When, by whom, and of what material was it built? Was it hell? Some learned divines tell us that hell is a condition, and not a place; but a prison is a place, a bounded locality. The word has no other meaning. Hence, either there is a local hell, or the adjunct "in prison" is redundant. If there is no prison, why did Saint Peter speak of one? We find it hard to believe in a local spirit prison; we dislike to think the Apostle indulged in empty verbiage; and we are almost compelled to suppose his language figurative.

Again, who were the prisoners? If it be said, "They were the spirits of all the sinners who had died previous to that time," the congregation was the largest that ever listened to a single speaker. There must have been at least 50,000,000,000 spirits present on the great occasion. How much space did they occupy? Perhaps a spirit is infinitesimally small; if so, they may all have been near the speaker.

In this case an ordinary voice might have been loud enough for them all to hear. If the sinners then deserved a sermon or two, the wicked who have since died and gone to prison must also deserve to hear preaching. Why was not the place made a missionary station, and the efforts to save sinners continued? So far as we know, this was the only religious service ever held in that prison. The chaplain was perfect, but the time seems inadequate.

Again, preaching consists in talking to people, in delivering a religious discourse. Did Christ really talk to the prisoners, and in a language they all could understand? If so, either all had learned a common language after their incarceration, or the preacher spoke to them in a thousand different tongues at once or consecutively, or they were miraculously enabled to understand any language. Each supposition involves a miracle; and the Being that could empower these spirits to understand words new to them could as easily have empowered them to comprehend the ideas uttered without any words, and the preaching have been omitted. Inspiration and intuition are the divine methods of instructing souls; and possibly the preaching was not verbal and literal, but was spiritual communion without the use of tongue or ears.

It is supposed by those who adopt the literal theory, that the preaching to the spirits in prison took place during the interval between the death and resurrection of Christ. He died about three o'clock,

Friday afternoon. The women who went to the tomb Sunday morning, "very early, while it was yet dark," discovered that the sepulchre was empty. The hour of his rising is not stated; it may have been soon after midnight; and if so, he remained in the realm of the dead not longer than thirty-six hours. Was not that rather a short time to devote to preaching to several thousand millions of sinful spirits? With so many, and so vast interests at stake, it seems to us that a thousand years of preaching would have been none too much.

What did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? Old truth? If they did not know there is a God, and that they had violated His laws, and therefore deserved punishment, their imprisonment was cruel. They were in the condition of many a victim of the Spanish Inquisition, who found himself in a dungeon without being aware that he had done wrong. We dislike to think that Torquemada imitated God. But if the prisoners did know the law of God, and their guilt, then there was no need of preaching to them these old truths. Was it new truth, — the Gospel truth, that God had sent His Son to seek and save the lost, and that he was then doing this sublime work? If his mission extended to imprisoned spirits, this would have been worthy the Preacher and the occasion. But did they not know all about it? Had no new-comer, no "foul spirit" cast out by Jesus, told the news from earth? Had no John Howard

angel carried the glad tidings to the prison? It is written, "The devils believe and tremble;" were they better informed than their fellow-prisoners? The simple truth is this: we do not know, and we cannot imagine, the status of spirits in prison; and the preaching needed by them is to us unthinkable. But the preaching of Christ anywhere to any listeners must do good; and some of the hearers must have been converted and freed, — how many, we are not informed. Nor have we any promise that the Saviour will ever again visit this penitentiary. Unless all were redeemed in that thirty-six hours' ministry, there is nothing in Revelation to give any hope for the salvation of all the prisoners. The curtain falls on the dreary scene, and we wonder why it was raised. The strange statements of Saint Peter, unsupported by any other Scripture testimony, do not seem a sufficient basis on which to build a theory of the spirit realm; and we are compelled to believe they are not bits of history, but are to be interpreted figuratively.

The statement is explicit that there was a prison in which spirits were prisoners; if that place was not in the spirit world, where and what was it? Our answer is, the prison is the human, material body. In that, during this life, the immortal spirit is confined. Saint Paul calls it a tabernacle. The poets speak of it as a tenement, — "a close, immured wall." In dying the body "gives up the

ghost" — *pneuma*, the spirit — which it had held. This or similar phraseology is so common in the Bible, and so in accord with poetical and Christian usage, that no further comment is necessary. The prison is the material body, and the prisoners were the spirits of men and women living in this material world. To these Christ in spirit "went and preached, in times past, while the ark was being built." In making this statement, the Apostle gave expression to a very important Christian doctrine, too often overlooked, — the universality of Christ's mission and work. It is not of recent date. It did not begin when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, nor when the Babe was born in Bethlehem. The Word that was made flesh and dwelt in Palestine eighteen centuries ago, had long before thrilled the minds of prophets and patriarchs. The true Light, that lighteth every man who cometh into the world, had flashed its rays along the path of Israel in the Wilderness. Christ existed before he was sent to save mankind. The Christ spirit preached to spirits in prison before the Deluge, and was coeval with Adam. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." He was, he is, he will be, "the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever."

His mission was not to a few, — not to the chosen people, the elect, the called, but to all the human race. The narrowest kind of limitarianism is the belief that Christ works for human good only in

certain localities and through certain agencies. He "is the Saviour of all men, especially those that believe." He was in India before the arrival of the missionaries. As Brahma is said to be able to appear in human form in thousands of homes at the same moment, so Christ can be present, as a saving influence, in all the homes and hearts of earth at the same moment. He is not select in his choice of souls. He came to save all, if possible. He ate with publicans and sinners. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He preached the Gospel, in the "still, small voice," to the dead in sin and sensuality, and even to spirits in prison. Bear in mind that while the body confines the spirit, it is a prison to the ignorant and sinful only. The good spirit that understands and believes the Gospel, is not a prisoner; he enjoys the glorious liberty of the sons of God. In every land and age, Christ as a spiritual influence has been preaching to all souls; teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

Such is our interpretation of these difficult passages; and it harmonizes with the general scope of the Bible. It is free from ambiguity and absurdity, and is worthy the pen of him who was taught to call nothing "common or unclean." It is as if the Apostle had said, "Our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not a mere man of our times, not a

gifted and great man, but the divine Son of God, by whom the world was created, with whom man has always been in contact, —even the lowest and worst; and through him alone the world is to be saved." This is the Gospel; this is orthodox, and to us satisfactory; and to it we shall cling until something better is presented.

XVIII.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.

"*These shall go away into everlasting punishment.*" — MATT. XXV. 46.

HERE, at last, we find limitarianism announced in the plainest language. Christ has come again, in his glory, with his angels, has summoned into his august presence all nations, and has divided them into two classes, the righteous and the wicked. A brief trial takes place, a hearing is granted to all, and then the verdict is given: "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," — these to inherit the kingdom prepared for them "from the foundation of the world;" those to go "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It is impossible to state the case in any stronger or clearer language. The English words *eternal*, *everlasting*, *forever*, *for ever and ever*, mean endless duration, and nothing else. The eternal life and the everlasting punishment are of equal length; and both the punishment and the fire are everlasting. Is there any way through this awful shadow? To those who believe and want to believe in the unending misery of the wicked,

this passage of Scripture affords aid and comfort, — it settles the question; but for those who desire to know the exact meaning of the words, be it for or against them, and who try to compare Scripture with Scripture, light breaks in from several directions.

1. It is not certain that the phrase "eternal life," as used in the New Testament, ever indicates duration. Instead, it is certain that it generally means a particular kind or condition of life, — a pure, living, heavenly life; life in Christ; life in the kingdom of heaven. A few quotations will make this manifest. When the wealthy young man came to Jesus and said (Matt. xix. 16), "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" he did not mean, "that I may live forever." People in those days did not believe in conditional immortality. He did not inquire how he might be raised to life after death. He saw that Jesus was animated by a life or spirit which made him great, good, divine; and the young man desired to share that potent and noble life. It was the current report that Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah, and that he was about to establish on earth the glorious Messianic kingdom. The inquirer desired a place in it. That kingdom, the new national life, was to be enduring, eternal; and so long as he lived, he wished to share its glory and joy. "What good thing shall I do to attain that?" At that time even the Twelve did not real-

ize that Christ's kingdom was to be purely spiritual; and the young man manifested an ignorance equal to theirs. In reply to his question, Jesus told him how to become "perfect." Perfection and eternal life are one and the same; and neither of the terms means unending existence in heaven. The Beloved Disciple said (1 John v. 11, 12): "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Here eternal life does not mean immortality, or entrance into heaven, or anything future. It was something Saint John and his friends already had. It was the spirit, the animus, of Christ. To make this idea entirely clear and free from doubt, Jesus said (John xvii. 3): "This is eternal life, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." It is not a period of time or a local habitation, but an intelligent condition, a belief and faith in God and Christ.

In the passage under consideration, eternal life and eternal punishment are exact opposites. This is self-evident. If the one means endless happiness, the other means endless misery; if one refers to the immortal realm, so does the other. But, as has been shown, eternal life means only a kind of life, — a pure, perfect, divine life; hence everlasting punishment must mean the opposite, — an impure, imperfect, ungodly life. The one, of course, is joyful; the

other, joyless; but in neither is there any allusion to duration, long or short. We dare not say the passage means more than it expresses; and we are therefore obliged to confess that it fails to prove the endless punishment of the wicked.

2. As before stated, the English words *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *forever* signify endless duration; but it is not certain that either the Hebrew *olam* or its Greek equivalent *aionios* has often, if ever, this meaning in the Bible. In many a petty lawsuit, involving the rights of property alone, the exact meaning of every word in the contract is sought with the utmost care; in the case involving the destiny of immortal souls, the meaning of words cannot be too carefully weighed. A thorough review of all that has been written on the meaning of *aionios* would fill a large volume; in this brief chapter only a few items can be stated. Those who would see the subject fully ventilated can consult Dr. J. W. Hanson's "Aion — Aionios." Jesus said, and Matthew wrote, "These shall go away into *aionian* punishment." But *aionios* does not always mean "endless;" and in the Bible it rarely has this signification, as the following considerations clearly indicate.

In any and every large Greek lexicon, the radical meaning of *aion* is said to be "age;" and the derivative meanings are "time, a lifetime, a long period of time, time indefinite." That this is the true definition may be inferred from the facts that *aion* has a

plural, as *eternity* has not: and that *aions* of *aions*, *aions* and beyond, the ends of the *aions*, and this *aion* and the *aion* to come, are spoken of in the Bible. No such usage of the word *eternity* is admissible. Hence *aion* does not mean "eternity." *Aionios* is an adjective derived from *aion*, and it must mean "pertaining to an *aion*." It does not therefore signify "eternal" or "everlasting." Jesus did not say, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment," although the translators put that word in his mouth. Let us not be wise above what was written in Greek. A few quotations of Scripture will show the correctness of the above statements: —

Dan. ii. 44: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand *forever*," — be an *aionian* kingdom. This implies a very long period of time, but not endless duration. The prophecy is generally supposed to refer to Christ's kingdom, his mediatorial reign; but this is to end. We read (1 Cor. xv. 24–28): "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God . . . that God may be all in all." From that moment, his mission being accomplished, Christ will cease to be a mediator, and his kingdom be involved in the eternal reign of God. The long *aion* has terminated.

Other *aions* (English, *æons*) of great length are mentioned in the Bible, though not so long as the duration of Christ's kingdom. For example, Canaan was given to the Jews for an everlasting possession; the Aaronic priesthood was to be everlasting; and the Mosaic law, with all its ritualistic details, was to be everlasting. These æons embraced many centuries, but finally came to an end. Gehazi was to remain a leper forever; and the slave who at the year of Jubilee did not wish to become free was to remain a servant forever. In these two cases the *aion* meant simply during the remainder of life, — a lifetime. Jonah was in the great fish three days, yet he said, "The earth with her bars was about me forever." This æon lasted only three days! We find in the New Testament the phrase "for ever and ever," — Latin, *secula seculorum;* Greek (Rev. xiv. 11), *aionas aionon.* If one *ever* does not imply endless duration, a thousand added *evers* would not equal eternity. In the copious Greek language there are, it is said, a dozen different phrases that indicate absolute endlessness. Instead of using one of these, Jesus employed the indefinite word *aionios* to describe the punishment of the wicked. If he meant endless punishment, why did he not say it emphatically? He did not mean it.

3. More important and conclusive than all else is the connection in which the passage under examination occurs. It is at the end of a long discourse

given by Jesus to his disciples as he sat on the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem. It embraces the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus had said that the temple would be so entirely destroyed that not "one stone upon another" would remain. The twelve did not doubt the truth of the Master's statement, strange as it seemed; but they cared less for the temple than for the kingdom which Christ was soon to establish, in which they were to share his glory; and, vaguely surmising that his assumption of royalty, the destruction of the temple, and the end of the existing state of affairs were to be simultaneous events, they eagerly asked him, "*When* shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" The translation of one word in this question is very unhappy, and it has led many to wrong conclusions. It is the word *world*. There is no proof that the disciples at that time had any idea that either the solid earth, or the human race on the earth, would ever come to an end; and they did not inquire about such unthinkable events. Thoughts of the new kingdom filled their minds. The word they used was *aion*. This word never means "the earth" or "the human race"; and it should never be so rendered. It does mean "age," and in the margin of the Revised Version of the New Testament the phrase "end of the world" is rendered "the consummation of the age." This is right. The revisers clung to the common version with heroic

tenacity, but their honesty compelled them to give in the margin the true sense of the original. The question was, therefore: "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?" — the then existing, Mosaic, sinful age. To this question, and this alone, Jesus replied in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew.

It is true, many commentators assert that for a time the Saviour does talk about the destruction of Jerusalem, the downfall of the Jewish nation, and the inauguration of the Christian dispensation; but suddenly he leaves that subject, and describes the last scene in the solemn tragedy of earth and man. But why the transition is made, and where the break occurs, it is not easy to decide. Any careful reader of these two chapters must see that the connection throughout is close and perfect. It is said, in reference to the horrors attending the siege of Jerusalem (Matt. xxiv. 21), "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." If Jesus meant what he said, no other misery will ever be worse. (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30) "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the

tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Whatever may be meant by these Oriental figures of speech, the tremendous scene was to occur "immediately after the tribulation of those days," — that is, a short time after. (Matt. xxiv. 34) "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." A more explicit statement than this cannot easily be made. It makes clear the fact that the coming of Christ in power and glory was then near, close at hand. We are sure of the time, — it was eighteen hundred years ago; and we are now ready to consider the events that transpired on that great occasion. (Matt. xxv. 31, 32 *et seq.*) "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them [the nations] one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Then follow the details of the judgment, as it is called, ending with the statement, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Thus Jesus fully answered the question of his disciples, stating the time, the signs, and, in part, the results.

An attempt to explain the highly wrought, figurative language employed by the Teacher is not in the line of this argument; the manifest facts

are sufficient for our present purpose: (1) The time in which all these events transpired was more than eighteen centuries ago. (2) "The end of the world" was the end of the Jewish dispensation. (3) The coming of Christ in glory was not the visible appearance of a person descending from the clouds, but the inauguration of the Christian dispensation. (4) The events all took place on the earth, among living people, and not in the spiritual realm. No resurrection of the dead is mentioned. (5) Nations, and not individuals, were separated and judged. (6) The rewards and punishments — the æonian life and its opposite — were earthly and temporal affairs. (7) Christ still occupies the throne of his glory, the judgment is ever going on, and the events of history are verifying the prophecy. Every nation and person that is imbued with the Christian spirit is enjoying life eternal; while those who do not possess that spirit are suffering æonian punishment.

Finally, whatever *aionios* may mean, it is not often applied to the doom of the wicked. Neither endless misery nor endless torment is mentioned in the Bible. The phrase "eternal death" has no place in the Bible. Æonian damnation is not alluded to in the Revised Version. Why this reticence? Can any evangelical Christian answer? We need have no fear of a fate of which the Word of God does not give clear and repeated warnings.

XIX.

ENDLESS MISERY.

"God grew dark with utter wrath; and in the grasp
Of His almighty strength, took them upraised,
And threw them down into the yawning pit
Of bottomless perdition, ruined, damned.
A groan returned, ...
As if all misery, all sorrow, grief,
All pain, all anguish, all despair, which all
Have suffered or shall feel from first to last,
Eternity had gathered in one pang,
And issued in one groan of boundless woe."

POLLOK'S *Course of Time*, book iv.

NOT being able to remember any passage of Scripture suited to the subject of this chapter, we give as a substitute the above seemingly appropriate quotation from a once popular English poem. It portrays the beginning of endless woe so clearly, eloquently, and honestly, that every reader, whether believer or unbeliever, ought to be entirely satisfied.

The object of the preceding chapters in this book has not been to disprove or deny the doctrine of endless misery, but simply to show that it is not taught in the Bible. We have carefully and candidly

examined the strong texts, phrases, and words relied upon to prove this doctrine, and found that not a single one of them can honestly be pressed into its service. Yet it is a solemn fact that a large majority of the people called Christian profess to believe that many millions of keenly sensitive souls, our brothers and sisters, will be indescribably unhappy forever; and that this frightful doctrine is believed not only by the ignorant and callous, but also by multitudes of highly cultured, pious, and tender-hearted men and women. Moreover, it is distinctly taught in many pulpits, Sunday-schools, books, magazines, and newspapers; and to doubt its truth is, in many churches, deemed heresy.

We do not feel inclined to censure people for believing in this awful dogma, or to affirm that they refuse to use their reason or to shun investigation. On the contrary, we sympathize with them; we honor them for their adherence to what they deem true; we extend to them the hand of Christian fellowship, and easily find several good and strong reasons for their holding fast their faith in endless misery. Some of these reasons the spirit of kindness requires us to consider; yet, lest we should seem offensively to speak of others, we prefer to give the reasons for our disbelief.

We do not believe in the doctrine in question, because its awfulness, its infinite horror, is too vast for a finite mind to grasp. Possibly a great many profess

to believe it who do not try to comprehend it. In the old Greek mythology Prometheus is represented as chained, hands and feet, to a rock. Unable to protect himself, vultures came every day and tore out his vitals, which grew again every night. The pain, of course, was excruciating; but for him there was no rest, no change, no hope. Imagine millions of human beings compelled to endure, if possible, a more intense agony, and among them your parents, companions, children, whose bitter anguish must continue on, on, on, without a moment's cessation or a ray of hope, through all eternity. Possibly some people are so constituted, so hardened by sin or so refined by grace, that they can think of all this with composure, profess to believe it, and praise God for His great goodness; but to us the thought is sickening and unbearable. We sink in sympathetic agony, and must either doubt the doctrine or become insane. We accept the benefit of the doubt, and save our reason. Not choice, but necessity, leads to our disbelief.

Again, we are led to doubt this doctrine because it is a pagan doctrine, and has the cruel air of heathenism. In the savage period called the Dark Ages, all Europe believed it. It was the motive power that worked the enginery of the Inquisition. Islamism is aflame with everlasting fire. Mythology teaches it. The old religions of Asia are lurid with burning hells. All this may not be thought of or cared for

by the average believer in the awful dogma; but the fact that it is indigenous in paganism, that it is congenial to savages, and that it flourishes among people that have no Bible and no conception of the one true God, certainly suggests grave doubts of its truth.

That portion of revelation contained in the Old Testament, in the opinion of all scholarly theologians, does not teach the immortality of man, much less immortal suffering. Persons who are not aware of this fact, but believe that the writings of the ancient Prophets contain many a text proving the doctrine of unending woe, should not be blamed for cherishing that article of their creed. But the reticence of the Prophets and the silence of God on this subject, His neglect for four thousand years to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come beyond the grave, suggest an abiding doubt respecting the existence of such a wrath.

But the New Testament? Well, the doctrine in question is not distinctly taught in this portion of the Word of God; for, if it were, controversy and doubt would not have begun. Great plainness of speech is possible. No one doubts that John Calvin believed in and taught the doctrine of endless punishment; but there has long been, and there still is, a sharp debate going on among students of the Gospel on the question, "Do the writings of the Apostles teach an unending woe for sinners?" Without indistinctness

in the text no such debate would be possible; and the neglect of the Apostles to state the matter clearly must and does suggest a doubt of its truth. But more than this, in the preceding pages we have examined, as many others have before, every nook and corner of the New Testament wherein the doctrine has been supposed to lurk, and have failed to find the faintest trace of it. What can we do but disbelieve? Those who in childhood were frightened or coaxed into a church that professed to believe this doctrine; who have often heard it taught in the pulpit by beloved pastors; who have often read it in religious books and papers; who have not time, opportunity, or brain to make a thorough investigation; and who might be expelled from the church, lose caste, and perhaps suffer financially by any change in religious opinions, — should not be too severely blamed for clinging to their early impressions. We are not of that unfortunate number.

The fact that many Christians in the first two centuries of our era hoped for the final restitution of all sinners, and that many learned and pious men and women in our day still indulge in this sublime hope, leads us to doubt the vindictive theories of dark ages and ignorant people. All good beings would like to have all sinners converted and saved. This is a fact of hopeful significance. It is written, "God will have all men to be saved." Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and

I will give you rest." Charles Wesley, in this sweet verse of the "Convert's Hymn," voiced the feelings of all genuine disciples of Christ: —

"Jesus all the day long
Was my joy, and my song
Was redemption through faith in his name.
Oh that all might believe,
And salvation receive,
And their song and their joy be the same."

Every missionary movement is an expression of the same excellent desire. Every true prayer of the Church is for the salvation of sinners, even all sinners. Are all these holy desires to remain unsatisfied forever? We hope not.

The entire uselessness of unending misery is also to be taken into consideration. Any unprejudiced person can see at a glance that it would not do any good to its victims, that the sight or knowledge of it would not benefit the saints or angels, and that it would add no glory or honor to Christ or God. It would be only an eternal nuisance in the universe, which, it seems to us, the wise, mighty, beauty-and-order-loving God cannot and will not tolerate. The annihilation of the wicked would be far better. Besides, it would be a manifest injustice and fiendish cruelty, wholly repulsive. The laws of all civilized nations, and also the Divine laws set forth in the Bible, provide that each criminal shall be punished according to his deeds, — for light offences, a small

penalty; for great crimes, severe punishment. This, all men approve as just and right. Endless punishment would be an infinite penalty; and no one sin, nor any number of sins added together, can equal infinity. Such a penalty would therefore be unjust and cruel. Only continual sinning can deserve continual punishment; the guilty deeds must keep up with the penalty, or the balance of justice be lost. And this is the theory of modern Orthodoxy, — eternal sin and eternal woe. But here comes in the cruelty. To permit a finite soul to sin and suffer forever is infinite cruelty. To crush out of existence a sinner in danger of such a fate, or to paralyze his every faculty, would be tender mercy; to permit him to go on sinning and suffering eternally, diabolic cruelty. We cannot believe God to be as heartless as the Satan of superstition.

The doctrine of endless sin and punishment impeaches the wisdom, goodness, and power of the Supreme Being. In the remote past there was a time when there was no sin, no human being, no habitable earth; but God meditated the creation of earth and man. To say that He did not foresee the fate of the human race before He created Adam and Eve, is not only to charge Him with a lack of foresight, but also with a deficiency of common sense. That the young, weak, ignorant, tempted first pair of human beings would make mistakes, blunder, and do wrong, was absolutely certain. This the All-wise

must have known; yet, knowing it, He called into existence a race millions of whom, He knew, would forever sin and suffer. Was this wise? Would you have done it? To affirm that He did knowingly and deliberately inaugurate an immense amount of eternal sin and woe, is equivalent to declaring not only that He is not all-good, but also that He has some exceedingly bad traits of character. To assert that He did foreknow that men would sin, and many forever suffer, yet was obliged to create earth and man, is to deny His almighty power. It is not true. He was subjected to no pressure. He could or He could not create man, just as He pleased. If He was not at liberty to do as He pleased, then there is no Almighty. We are not prepared to take this step into atheism; and to claim that from "before the foundation of the world" God in His great mercy provided the means whereby some would be saved, does not mend the matter: the Creator of the lost must still bear the blame. He must have foreseen that vast multitudes of sinners would never hear the name of Christ, nor be in the least benefited by his mission to earth. The only solution of the problem of sin that is honorable to God and comforting to man is that it will ultimately end. God's children were made to be, designed to be, foreordained to be, at last and forever holy and happy; and they will be. God is all-wise, all-good, almighty; and though we may not comprehend the mystery of evil, we may

rest assured that the Divine plan will be carried out in every particular, and all His children will "glorify and enjoy Him forever."

It was reported that Robert G. Ingersoll began one of his lectures by saying, "I hate God." If he meant that he hated the Being, real or imaginary, that created immortal souls to sin and suffer without end, can we blame him for the harsh statement? Such a Being we could fear, and bow down to in prayer and verbal worship; but we could not love or even respect Him. We need not go back to the creation of our first parents; for Him to permit thousands of children to be born every day, and live to adult age with scarcely a probability of conversion before death, does not seem to us kind or wise. He did in one night smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt; He can do the same now; and not to kill in infancy all children in danger of being lost if they grow up, seems like a lack of mercy.

If all souls are not finally saved, Christ's mission to earth was a sad failure. He was sent, and he came, to seek and save the lost, — to save the world. All needful power was given him to do this glorious work; he tried; he gave himself a ransom for all; he tasted death for every man: yet he failed. A few he has saved; many more he will save: but the majority, even in lands nominally Christian, are still going down the broad road to destruction. Either

sinners were harder to save, or his grace, gospel, and death less potent, than was expected. Down, down, nevermore to rise, have gone, and are still going, a multitude that no man can number; and the Saviour cannot prevent it. This we cannot admit. The Calvinistic blood in our veins protests against it. We cannot refrain from believing that every soul he came to save, will be saved; and that he came to save all, is now generally conceded. In either case, whether he was commissioned to save all or only to save a part, his success is assured. God would not employ such a divine agent, and a failure ensue. If he was not sent to seek and save all the lost, — to "taste death for every man," to give "himself a ransom for all," — the partiality and the blame rest on Deity; but if he was sent to be the Saviour of the world, there will be no failure: the world will be saved.

These are some of the reasons that create our doubt of the truth of the doctrine in question; and with these reasons meeting us at every turn of thought, we cannot do otherwise. Why so many do profess to believe in endless punishment, we know not: but it may be that many of its supposed adherents are silent doubters; that many have not sufficient mental capacity to realize its enormity, and hence believe they know not what; that many are entirely ignorant of the great and precious promises in the Gospel; that many, like the late Rufus Choate,

are willing to "accept what the Doctor teaches, without question;" that some are cowardly, desirous to be on the safe side; and that some advocate the doctrine just to build up their sect. God help us all!

XX.

INTO THE LIGHT.

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." — 1 Cor. xv. 22.

ONLY one more shadow can dim our faith. If the Bible does not clearly and repeatedly reveal the ultimate holiness and happiness of all intelligent souls, we are still out in the dark and the cold. Intuition, reason, the heart, the sense of honor and right, though they teach our doctrine, may have no clinch of logic that holds. It is conceded by all Christians that God, by prophets and apostles, and more than all by Jesus Christ, has spoken to us something in relation to our final destiny. If that something is only a dubious hint or two, we may well doubt and fear; but if He distinctly announces a glorious future for all, His announcement settles the question, and pours around us the clear light of eternal day. Our final appeal is therefore to the Word of God. We have not time or space to quote all the passages that teach this sublime truth of universal salvation; but we will cite enough to banish all doubt from the minds of the candid.

In our examination of the Scriptures, we are forcibly impressed with the *allism* (to coin a word that exactly expresses our meaning) that pervades the entire book. For all human beings there is one and the same moral law, call to repentance, throne of grace, and Father in heaven. God is no respecter of persons. In His pure sight, all men have sinned, and all misbelieved; all were weak, all were tempted, and all needed a Saviour. All were worth saving; and means were employed to save all, if possible. All Christians except rigid Calvinists (if there are any) admit and believe this. Notice now how this allism constitutes the essential element, the very soul, of many important passages.

1 Cor. xv. 22: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." In, through, or by our first parents, a calamity fell upon the entire human race. Saint Paul calls this calamity death. In the old nursery-rhyme we were taught that

> "In Adam's fall
> We sinnèd all."

Precisely in what the misfortune consisted, is of no consequence to our argument; its universality is beyond question; and so, also, is the counteracting, remedial influence of God in Christ. In, through, or by Christ shall all be made alive. Some benefit, some blessed change, comes to all in the great plan of redemption; and the good is coextensive with the evil. In each member of the sentence, the allism

is absolute, — "all die," "all be made alive." This is enough for our present line of thought; the uplifting influence overmasters the depressing influence.

But light breaks in from another statement of the Apostle. He says (2 Cor. v. 17, 18): "If any man be in Christ," — and to be alive in Christ is the same thing, or more, — "he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." In other words, entering into the spirit of Christ, or being made alive in Christ, is a great change for the better. The old, dark, dreary condition vanishes; the man becomes a new creature, and perceives that he is in a divine realm, wherein God is all in all. His change, his condition, his salvation, is perfect. And all who die in Adam (that is, absolutely all human beings) are thus to be made alive in Christ, and thus attain the new condition, — salvation from the old, the dark, and the sinful. When, where, how, this is to be done, we may not know; it is enough that all *shall be* made alive in Christ. Saint Paul uses the strongest language possible; and we are unable to imagine how any candid reader can avoid feeling that universal salvation is clearly taught by his unequivocal statement.

1 Tim. ii. 4: "God will have all men to be saved." In the Revised Version: "God willeth all men to be saved." Sinners alone need to be saved; and the evident meaning is, God willeth all sinners to be

saved. This is a very broad and strong statement. If He is merely willing that all men shall be saved, if He does not oppose the salvation of all, we may hope that Jesus Christ will succeed in saving all. If God wishes to save all men, — if He has any, even the slightest, preference in favor of the salvation of all, — our hope ripens into certainty. All His wishes and preferences are sure to be gratified. But when the absolute will of the Infinite is announced, when He willeth (will have) all men to be saved, there not being in the universe any thing or being that can in the least or for a moment hinder Him from doing and having just what He pleases, — the ultimate salvation of all is a foregone conclusion, an absolute certainty. If all men are not to be saved, why was the pen of inspiration allowed to indulge in statements so positive yet so delusive?

Immediately following this glorious revealment is another instance of Gospel allism.

1 Tim. ii. 6: "Christ gave himself a ransom for all." The same idea is expressed in Heb. ii. 9: "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." This does not prove that all men will be redeemed by the ransom or saved by the death; but it does prove that God is in earnest about having His way and doing His will. No half-measures, no limited means, are employed. He sends

His Son to be a ransom for all, to die for all, to save all, because He willeth all to be saved.

In the same chapter there is another specimen of allism (1 Tim. ii. 1): "I exhort that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." These prayers were not to be a solemn mockery, mere formal utterance of words, but sincere, earnest petitions. Anything less than this in prayer is unapostolic and unchristian. In praying for all men, the only appropriate petition is, so far as we can see, to ask for their conversion from sin and error, and their forgiveness and salvation. We have heard clergymen intercede for the Divine blessing to be bestowed upon all "for whom it is right to pray." Of course it would be needless and even wrong to pray for those doomed to remain unblessed forever. But Paul, Timothy, and their colaborers were troubled by no such scruples. This does not necessitate a favorable answer to the prayer, — God knows best what is best, — but it does show very clearly a strong hope in the final salvation of all mankind.

It is barely possible that in these three remarkable statements Saint Paul meant to say that God will have some to be saved, that Christ gave himself a ransom for some, and that we should pray for some; but we prefer to believe that the Apostle made no mistake, that he meant just what he wrote, and that he more than intimated a holy, happy future for all men.

Phil. ii. 9–11: "God also hath highly exalted him [Jesus], and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The great family of mankind is at last of one mind and heart. All devoutly kneel, and all confess the supremacy of Christ. There is not a doubter or an unbeliever among them. It is not said they will then all be holy and happy. Some perhaps may kneel and confess by compulsion, and thus God be able to enjoy, like an infinite Nebuchadnezzar or Nero, the pageant of a humbled race. But if the words of Isaiah are rightly translated, and refer to the same event, the affair will be more than a vain show; it will be a manifestation of deep and joyous feeling. He says (Isa. xlv. 22–24): "I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." A soul that can say, with all the force of an oath, that it has righteousness and strength in the Lord must be a saved soul; and all souls will make that assertion. But, to put the matter beyond doubt, Saint John in his wonderful Patmos vision says (Rev. v. 13): "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the

earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." All intelligent beings unite in this ascription of praise; all do it with a zest; and all are apparently satisfied and happy. Ingenious and profound theologians may find some way in which the "every knee, every tongue, and every creature," mentioned in these three sublime passages, may signify only a part of the human race; but we are content to take the plain, common-sense view of the case, and to rejoice in the glorious prospect set before us by Isaiah, Paul, and John.

At the birth of Jesus an angel said to the shepherds (Luke ii. 9, 10): "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." We are one of the people; and we can honestly say that if Christ is only to open the way whereby some may be saved, and many are not to be saved, and this is the last and only chance for salvation, the good tidings is to us not joyful, but painful. But if the good tidings is that the new-born Saviour will effect the salvation of all souls from sin and woe, we are filled with great joy, and can heartily say, with the angel host, "Glory to God in the highest."

Many other convincing passages might be quoted,

and many other arguments employed; but these are sufficient for our purpose. We have emerged from the shadows, wherein are doubt and fear and torment, into the clear light of the Gospel, wherein are certainty, peace, love, and joy; and we thank God and take courage.

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